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PAK CHOOSES ESCALATION

INDIA KILLS 100 TERRORISTS SO FAR

PAK FIRES MISSILES ON J&K, RAJASTHAN

MISRI SAYS CHOICE OF DE-ESCALATION LIES WITH PAK

Russian-made S-400 helps India successfully intercept missiles and drones launched by Pakistan army in Jaisalmer; A big hole is seen on a rooftop of a house suspected to have been damaged in Indian drone attack in Karachi, Pakistan on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Pakistan launched missiles and drones targeting Jammu and Kashmir in a big escalation on Thursday night. Eight missiles aimed at RS Pura, Arnia, Samba, and Hiranagar were intercepted by Indian Air Defence. Drones were downed over Jaisalmer, and missile strikes targeted military stations in Pathankot, Jammu and Udhampur.

Jammu and Srinagar plunged into darkness after loud blasts. Officials confirmed Pakistani drones near the airport were neutralised. An F-16 jet from Pakistan's Sargodha base was reportedly shot down by India's surface-to-air missile system.

Government said there were no casualties.

Earlier in the day, India thwarted Pakistan's attempts to strike 15 military locations across Northern and Western India with drones and missiles, while also neutralising Pakistani air defence systems, including one in Lahore, the Defence Ministry said on Thursday.

The strikes were attempted on the night of 7–8 May at sites including Srinagar, Jammu, Pathankot, Amritsar, Chandigarh and others. However, India's Integrated Counter Unmanned Aircraft System and S-400 air defence platforms responded swiftly to neutralise the threat. The Ministry of Defence warned that any future attack on Indian military targets would invite a "suitable response".

OPERATION SINDOOR

Pakistan's offensive came in retaliation to India's earlier Operation Sindoor, under which Indian armed forces conducted precision missile strikes on nine terror targets in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh told an all-party meeting that the Operation Sindoor, still ongoing, has so far eliminated at least 100 terrorists.Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, addressing a press briefing, said the choice of de-escalation lies with Pakistan. "As far as we are concerned, the individuals eliminated at these facilities were terrorists," he said, dismissing Pakistani claims of civilian deaths.

What has further fuelled the row is the presence of top Lashkar-e-Taiba commanders and Pakistan Army personnel at the funerals of those killed in the Indian strikes. Misri pointed to images of coffins wrapped in Pakistani flags and said, "It is odd that funerals of supposed civilians are held with state honours. These were not civilians, but terrorists." In response, the Pakistan Army claimed it shot down 25 Indian Harop drones in locations including Lahore, Gujranwala, and Bahawalpur, with three civilians killed and eight others injured, including four soldiers. Meanwhile, the Line of Control remains volatile, with Pakistan resorting to heavy mortar and artillery fire across sectors in Jammu and Kashmir, leading to 16 civilian deaths . In light of the hostilities, Punjab's Gurdaspur district imposed an eight-hour blackout from 9 pm Thursday, citing border securty concerns. —*PTI*

I know both well and I want to see them work it out. They have gone tit for tat, so hopefully they can stop now. I know both, we get along with both the countries very well, And If I can do anything to help, I will be there

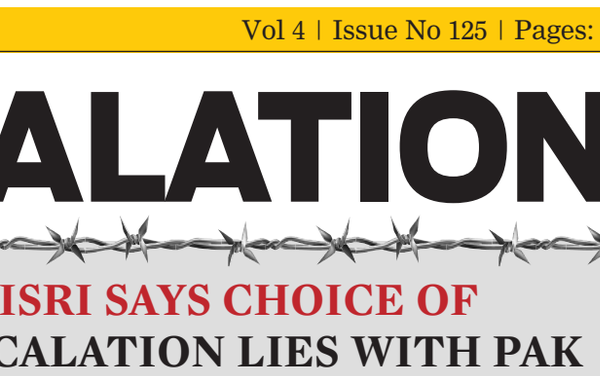
—Donald Trump, US President

GOVT ADVISES OTTs TO STOP STREAMING PAKISTANI CONTENT

New Delhi, 8 May

The government on Thursday advised OTT platforms to discontinue streaming of Pakistan-origin content, including web-series, films and podcasts, with immediate effect. "In the interest of national security, all OTT platforms, media streaming platforms and intermediaries operating in India are advised to discontinue the web-series, films, songs, podcasts and other streaming media content, whether made available on a subscription-based model or otherwise, having its origins in Pakistan with immediate effect," the advisory issued by the ministry said. —*PTI*

BACKING TERROR?



Pakistan Army personnel allegedly attended the funeral of three terrorists killed in the Indian strikes along with members of Hafiz Saeed's JuD on Wednesday **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

BORDER STATES ON HIGH ALERT

States bordering Pakistan are on high alert as the country braces for an attack. Leaves of all police personnel in Rajasthan and Punjab and Gujarat have been cancelled, officials said on Thursday. Schools in the border four border districts of Rajasthan-- Sri Ganganagar, Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Barmer -- and six of Punjab -- Ferozepur, Pathankot, Fazilka, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Tarn Taran -- have also been shut. —PTI

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PAK MARKET CRASHES 6%

KARACHI, 8 MAY

The Pakistan Stock Exchange plunged by over 6 per cent on Thursday with trading halted for an hour after rumours of escalation in military action by India near Karachi.

The benchmark KSE100 index tumbled 6,948.73 points (6.32 per cent) to 1,03,060.30 before the trading was halted. Trading resumed with Fatima Bucha of AKD Securities confirming the situation on the floor had calmed down a bit. —*PTI*

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IC-814 HIJACK MASTERMIND KILLED

BJP claimed on Thursday that Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorist Abdul Rauf Azhar, wanted in a string of terror attacks in India including the one on Parliament, was killed in Operation Sindoor. Azhar was JeM Founder Maulana Masood Azhar's brother and had reportedly headed the proscribed outfit in his absence. Besides the terror attack on Parliament in 2001, he was also involved in the IC-184 Kandahar plane hijack and Pathankot terror attack. In a statement attributed to him, JeM Chief Maulana Masood Azhar acknowledged on Wednesday that 10 members of his family and four close associates were killed in India's missile attack on the outfit's headquarters in Bahawalpur. —*PTI*

PAK INTRUDER BSF SHOT DEAD

Border Security Force (BSF) has shot dead a Pakistani intruder along the International Border in Punjab, officials said Thursday. The man was shot during the intervening night of May 7-8 in the Ferozepur sector, they said. He was found crossing the International Border purposefully in the dark.

Helicopter to Gangotri crashes in U'khand, 6 dead

UTTARKASHI, 8 MAY

A helicopter on way to the Gangotri temple crashed near Gangnani in Uttarkashi district on Thursday, killing six persons, including the pilot and leaving one seriously injured. Five women pilgrims were among the dead. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

CJI recommends impeachment of Justice Varma

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna has formally recommended to the Centre the impeachment of Allahabad High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma, following his indictment in the cash discovery controversy. Acting under the in-house procedure, the CJI has written to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, sharing the report of a Supreme Court-appointed three-member committee and Justice Varma's response. The panel—comprising Chief Justices Sheel Nagu (Punjab & Haryana), G S Sandhawalia (Himachal Pradesh), and Justice Anu Sivaraman (Karnataka)—confirmed the allegations after examining over 50 witnesses, including Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora. The incident involved a fire at Justice Varma's Lutyens' Delhi residence on 14 March, where cash was reportedly discovered. Justice Varma, then a Delhi High Court judge, was transferred to the Allahabad High Court without judicial duties following preliminary findings. Despite being advised to resign, he refused, prompting the CJI's recommendation for impeachment. —*PTI*

6 killed in car and truck collision in Haveri district

HAVERI, 8 MAY

Six family members tragically lost their lives and two others were injured in a road accident involving a car and a truck on Thursday. Authorities reported that the incident occurred near Motebennur in Haveri district when the driver lost control of the vehicle, resulting in a collision with the lorry from behind. The injured passengers have been admitted to hospital, where their condition is currently described as serious. The victims hailed from Siddeshwara Nagar in Ranebennur city and were travelling to Agadi Thota for their children's school holidays. —*PTI*

'Kantara 2' junior artiste drowns in Udupi river

UDUPI DISTRICT, 7 MAY

A junior artiste working on upcoming Kannada film 'Kantara: Chapter 1' drowned in Souparnika River in Udupi district, prompting a temporary halt in the shooting, police said on Thursday.

The deceased artist is identified as M F Kapil.

MF Kapil allegedly entered the river for a swim when he was swept away by strong currents on Wednesday. A prompt search and rescue operation was launched by the fire department and local authorities, and his body was recovered later that night, they said. According to the superintendent of police, Udupi district Arun K, a case of unnatural death has been registered. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

Man strangles boy, throws body in Bengaluru lake

BENGALURU, 8 MAY

A eight-year-old boy was allegedly murdered and stomped by his neighbour over a petty quarrel between children. The incident occurred under the Parappana Agrahara police limits, and the boy's body was recovered from Rayasandra Lake on Wednesday.

The victim, Ramananda, was the son of Natun Sahani, a migrant worker from Bihar. The accused, 36-year-old Chandreshwar Mattur, also from Bihar, lived next to the victim's family in a temporary shed near Doddamara, Rayasandra.

Both men worked as security guards, while their wives were employed as domestic workers in nearby apartments. Their children, including the victim and Mattur's son and daughter, often played together.

Chandreshwar Mattur and Ramananda **PHOTO: SALAR**

Police said a scuffle between the children, during which Ramananda allegedly hit Mattur's children, led to tensions. A verbal argument broke out between the families, reportedly escalating when Ramananda's mother shouted at Mattur.

Enraged and seeking revenge, Mattur allegedly lured the boy to the lake on 6 May.

There, he is accused of strangling Ramananda, forcing his head into the muddy lakebed, and stomping it down to conceal the body.

Following Ramananda's disappearance, his parents launched a frantic search and later filed a missing complaint.

Investigators grew suspicious of Mattur's behaviour and detained him for questioning.

During interrogation, he confessed to the murder, officials confirmed.

Police took Mattur to the crime scene, where the child's body was recovered and sent for post-mortem.

A case of murder has been registered. —*Salar News*

CARDINAL ROBERT PREVOST IS THE NEW POPE

THE VATICAN, 8 MAY

The Vatican has officially announced American Robert Prevost, Leo XIV, as the new pope, succeeding the late Pope Francis. Prevost has been elected the first American pope in history.

The official senior cardinal stepped out on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica and announced "Habemus Papem," meaning in Latin – "We have a new pope."

Prevost was introduced as the 267th Pope of the Catholic Church late Thursday afternoon. He emerged from the balcony of the basilica to greet an emotional crowd gathered in the square.

The announcement comes after white smoke came from the chimney of the Sistine Chapel earlier this afternoon to signal that a new pope has been named.

The conclave of 133 cardinals reached a decision on the second day of deliberations.

Prevost, who currently heads the Vatican's influential Dicastery for Bishops, holds dual citizenship in the United States and Peru. His long-standing service in Peru and his current oversight of bishop appointments worldwide have positioned him prominently within the Church hierarchy.

Seen as a centrist with progressive leanings on social issues, Prevost shares ideological and pastoral similarities with Francis. —*PTI*

RELIEF FOR AUTOS, STEEL

Trump agrees to cut tariffs on UK

WASHINGTON, 8 MAY

US President Donald Trump has agreed to cut tariffs on UK autos, steel and aluminum in a planned trade deal with Britain. The latter will buy more American beef and streamline its customs process for goods from the United States.

The symbolically resonant agreement is yet to be finalised, but it suggested that Trump was negotiating with other countries after his tariffs stoked fears of an economic downturn and higher inflation.

The announcement provided a political victory for UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer. It also offered a degree of validation for Trump's claims that his turbulent approach on trade may rebalance the global economy on his terms.

Trump talked up the agreement to reporters from the Oval Office, even as the fine print remains in flux. "The final details are being written up," Trump told reporters. "In the coming weeks, we'll have it all very conclusive."

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said the baseline 10 per cent tariffs would stay in place, while UK officials said Trump's auto tariffs would go from 27.5 per cent to 10 per cent on a quota of 1 lakh vehicles and the import taxes on steel and aluminum would go from 25 per cent to zero.

Starmer, speaking over the phone to Trump, stressed the importance of their relationship as the anniversary of World War II victory in Europe was being commemorated.

Britain has also sought tariff exemptions for pharmaceuticals, while the US wants greater access to the British market for agriculture products. Starmer has said UK won't allow chlorine-rinsed American chicken or hormone-treated beef.

The US ran a USD 11.9 billion trade surplus in goods with the UK last year, according to the Census Bureau. The USD 68 billion in goods that the US imported from the UK last year accounted for just 2 per cent of its imports. —*PTI*

Britain's PM Keir Starmer on the phone to US President Donald Trump **PHOTO: PTI**

Janardhan Reddy disqualified from Assembly

BENGALURU, 8 MAY

Former BJP minister Gali Janardhan Reddy, who was sentenced to 7 years in illegal mining case, has been disqualified from the Karnataka Legislative Assembly. he won the Gangavathi assembly seat in the 2023 elections. His disqualification comes under Article 191(1) (e) of the Constitution read with Section 8 of the Representation of the people Act, 1951. His disqualification will continue for a period of six years since his release, unless the conviction is stayed by a competent Court. As a result, one-seat of Legislative Assembly is now vacant. Reddy was accused of causing a loss of Rs 884.13 crore to the exchequer by illegally mining iron ore. *—Salar News*

Security tightened at Chinnaswamy Stadium for IPL

BENGALURU, 8 MAY

In preparation for the IPL match on 13 May between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Sunrisers Hyderabad, city police have implemented stringent security measures around key locations, particularly near the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. Following a directive from the central government to enhance security at public venues, over 70 police personnel have been assigned to oversee all entry and exit points, as well as to monitor crowds on match day. In addition to the stadium, vigilance has been heightened at metro stations, shopping centres, and other bustling areas across the city. Officials are conducting random checks while maintaining a continuous patrol as a precautionary measure. Police sources indicate that these enhanced security protocols are part of a broader strategy aimed at preventing any potential incidents, especially in light of recent national counter-terror operations. Authorities reassured the public that there is no specific threat but urged vigilance and cooperation with security measures. *—Salar News*

KEA exhibition at Mysuru Dasara Grounds

MYSURU, 8 MAY

The Karnataka Exhibition Authority (KEA) in collaboration with the Fun Fair Enterprises of Bengaluru will host a fun fair exhibition at the Dasara Exhibition Grounds here. The exhibition will begin from 9 May and continue till 17 June between 3pm and 10pm daily. Models of Nayagara Falls, amusement for children, commercial stalls, food court and special lighting are some of the attractions of the exhibition. KEA chairman Ayub Khan said that the exhibition is expected to generate arevenue of Rs 35 lakh to Rs 40 lakh. Adults and older children will be charged entry fees of Rs 50 and Rs 30 respectively, though free entry is allowed for those below five years *—Salar News*

Spl forces to protect vital installations in K'taka

Amid India-Pak tension, CM says alert is issued in State

BENGALURU, 8 MAY

Trained special forces are deployed to safeguard major installations in the State amid rising tensions between India and Pakistan, Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Thursday.

He said all districts Superintendents of Police (SPs) have been sensitised and given instructions on taking precautionary measures.

"We have special forces such as Karnataka State Industrial Security Force. We deploy them for safeguarding major installations like Raichur (thermal power station), Kaiga (nuclear power plant), and Krishna Raja Sagar Dam," Parameshwara said.

In response to a question whether the State has enough personnel, he said, "The available force were deployed. There is a requirement for additional strength. If we start the recruitment now, it will take a year of training."

An advisory from the Union government asked us to conduct mock drills at three places, Parameshwara said. "It will be held in various other places today, tomorrow and day after. The Centre has selected Karwar and Raichur to conduct the drills in addition to Bengaluru. We have included Mysuru in the list based on intelligent inputs."

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that the government issued alerts across the State and has taken precautionary measures as per the guidelines. *—PTI*

People hold placards and offer special pooja at a temple to celebrate 'Operation Sindhoor' at Jayanagar in Bengaluru on Thursday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

BJP TO HOLD PRAYERS AT TEMPLES FOR ARMED FORCES

BENGALURU, 8 MAY

BJP will hold special prayers at temples across the State for the well-being of the armed forces in the aftermath of 'Operation Sindoor'. State BJP President BY Vijayendra with party leaders and workers offered prayers at a temple on Thursday. "We have prayed to God for India's success and for strength to our armed forces," Vijayendra said. Meanwhile, special prayers are also being organised in all temples that come under the Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Department on the instructions of Endowment Minister Ramalinga Reddy. *—PTI*

MOSQUES TO HAVE SPL FRIDAY PRAYERS

Waqf and Minority Affairs Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan on Thursday said special prayers will be offered at mosques in the State on Friday for the well-being of Indian soldiers who took part in 'Operation Sindoor'.. He has written to the Chief Executive Officer of the Waqf Board.

OPERATION SINDOOR

Col Sofiya Qureshi is Belagavi's daughter-in-law

BELAGAVI, 8 MAY

Colonel Sofiya Qureshi, who briefed the national media at Delhi about 'Operation Sindoor' has a strong connection with Karnataka as her husband, Tajuddin Bagewadi, is from Konnur in Belagavi.

Sofiya hails from Vadodara in Gujarat and is serving as a Colonel in Jammu and Kashmir. Tajuddin holds the same post in Jhansi.

Her father-in-law, Goussab Bagewadi, told reporters that Tajuddin and Sofiya married in 2015. It was love-cum-arranged marriage conducted in Konnur. She also comes from a defence family; her father Taj Mohammed Quereshi participated in Bangladesh liberation war and her grandfather was also in the Army. Sofiya joined the Indian Army in 1999 during Kargil war.

"Our entire family, relatives, and friends are overwhelmed after seeing Sofiya briefing," Goussab Bagewadi said.

He said that Qureshi used to visit Konnuru once a year, mainly during Ramadan. However, she didn't this year, as she was planning to come for Bakrid. Tajuddin, on the other hand, used to visit twice in a year.

She prefers Vijayapura style jawar roti and nati koli (native chicken) dishes when she comes, he added.

After the briefing, their neighbours flocked to their house to congratulate them. Goussab said his family's phones hasn't stopped ringing.

Colonel Sofiya Qureshi with husband Tajuddin Bagewadi

Sofiya'a father-in-law, Goussab Bagewadi *PHOTO: SALAR*

Colonel Qureshi was lauded in a 2020 Supreme Court ruling in favour of Permanent Commissions to women officers in the Army. "Lieutenant Colonel Sophia Qureshi is the first woman to lead an Indian Army contingent at a multi-national military exercise named 'Exercise Force 18', which is the largest ever foreign military exercise hosted by India. She has served in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operation in Congo in 2006," the court said. *—PTI*

MANGO MELA'S HERE

Actor Daali Dhananjaya and MLA Uday Garudachar open Mango Mela at Garuda Mall in Bengaluru on Thursday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Lokayukta seize unaccounted wealth in state-wide raids

BENGALURU 8 MAY

The Karnataka Lokayukta on Thursday launched a state-wide operation against four government officials suspected of possessing disproportionate assets, with one of the key raids taking place in the city's Mahadevapura area.

According to the Lokayukta, the places raided were connected to Suresh Babu G, Survey Supervisor in the office of the Additional Director, Land Records in Kolar Taluk in Kolar district;

Raja Venkatappa Nayak, Taluk Health Officer, Taluk Health office, Surpur in Yadgir district and MB Ravi, Assistant Executive Engineer, Karnataka Urban Water Supply and Drainage Board in Davangere; and G Srinivas Murthy, Assistant Executive Engineer, Water Resources Department, Mahadevapura.

Based on specific intelligence inputs, sources in the Lokayukta police said the operation began early morning and many incriminating documents, unaccounted money and valuables were found from the locations which were searched. Further legal procedings will follow once the seized material is scrutinised, officials said *—Salar News with agencies*

BMTC BUS HITS 5 POURAKARMIKAS, 2 SERIOUSLY HURT

BENGALURU, 8 MAY

A Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) bus on Thursday morning rammed into five Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) pourakarmikas, severely injured two near Sangolli Rayanna Circle in Majestic here.

The driver reportedly felt drowsy while driving, possibly due to fatigue and lost control of the vehicle.

According to the police, the bus was en route from Majestic to Hebbal when it hit a road divider and then struck the pourakarmikas engaged in their morning duties.

The injured were identified as Shamim, 23, and Hussain, 35, both hailing from Uttar Pradesh. Shamim reportedly suffered a spinal injury and dental fractures. Hussain sustained critical wounds.

Initially rushed to KC General Hospital, they were later shifted to a higher facility for specialised care. The other three pourakarmikas sustained minor injuries.

The Sangolli Rayanna Circle's grill, an electricity pole and the bus' front portion were also damaged under the impact of the collision. The bus driver and conductor are undergoing treatment for minor injuries. Police are examining CCTV footage.

The BMTC is yet to issue a statement. *—Salar News*

Forest minister highlights need for stronger tree protection laws in Karnataka

BENGALURU, 8 MAY

Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar Khandre on Thursday stressed the need to amend the Preservation of Trees Act to take strict action against illegal cutting of trees on government lands.

Addressing a meeting at 'Aranya Bhavan', he highlighted the recent Supreme Court disapproval of tree felling and emphasised that safeguarding of trees was a collective responsibility in the face of global warming and climate change.

Noting that there is public anger over the permission to cut hundreds of trees in the name of development, Khandre said unnecessary tree felling should not be authorised.

According to a statement, the Minister directed officials to clear large forest encroachments and said the poor who had less than 3 acres of land -- including patta (cultivated land with ownership claims) and encroached land -- before 2015, should be resettled without any problem.

"Whoever has encroached on the forest land after 2015 should be cleared without mercy and action should be taken," he said. *—PTI*

HC stays order allowing reopening of Mysuru madrasa

MYSURU, 8 MAY

Karnataka High Court stayed Mysuru district administration's order that permits opening of a madrassa or Arabic school in Kyathamaranahalli, Mysuru. The court stayed the order on 6 May.

Advocate HM Bhaskar said that the district administration granted permission to Haleema Sadiya Education Institution and Masjid-E-Siddique-E-Akbar Trust to reopen a madrassa after resolving a long-standing dispute over the property on Kyathamaranahalli Main Road in Gayathripuram II Stage.

The Mysuru deputy commissioner G Lakshmikanth Reddy held a meeting on 1 April following a High Court directive to garner public opinions regarding the issue and submit a report to the court. Citing many Supreme Court rulings and Article 30, granting minorities the right to establish educational institutions, the DC ordered the reopening of the school.

The order permitted the trust to operate the madrasa under constitutional provisions, disallowing any disruption or obstruction.

Locals reportedly opposed the reopening of the school in the disputed land.

Staying the order, the High Court directed the Mysuru district administration and police to maintain status quo in the issue. *—Salar News*

Kannada row: Filmmaker boycotts Sonu

BENGALURU, 8 MAY

Singer Sonu Nigam's apology is not enough, he must also face repercussions for saying such harsh words, said Kannada director K Ramnarayan on Thursday. He said this while announcing his decision to replace two songs by the singer in his upcoming film 'Kuladalli Keelyavudo' with track versions.

"Connecting Kannada pride to the national tragedy that happened in Pahalgam is a very grave mistake. He must pay a price for that," said Ramnarayan.

'Kuladalli Keelyavudo', expected in theatres from 23 May, has already released three songs, two of which are by Nigam.

"He sang the title track, which is a tribute to the most famous Kannada song, featured in legendary actor Rajkumar's 1965 film 'Satya Harishchandra'. The original 'Kuladalli Keelyavudo' is also sacred for the Kannada film industry. How can this song be sung by someone like Nigam who thinks so lowly of us," said Ramnarayan.

"Track singer is Chethan Sosca. We actually liked the track versions of both the songs that we had sent to Nigam. Now, we are fine tuning them, so we could release them with Chethan's voice," added Ramnarayan.

A "track singer" refers to a singer who initially records a vocal performance for a song as a demo.

While 'Kuladalli Keelyavudo' has already been removed from YouTube by the makers, Nigam's version of 'Manasu Haadtade' is still available on his YouTube channel.

"I have a very long association with Nigam, who has sung more than 1,000 songs in Kannada," reminisced Ramnarayan, who wrote scripts and lyrics before he started directing. *—PTI*

DEATH ON SET?

Probe sought in 'Kantara' artiste death

NEW DELHI/UDUPI, 8 MAY

A junior artiste working on upcoming Kannada film 'Kantara: Chapter 1' drowned in Souparnika river in Udupi district, prompting a temporary halt in the shooting, police said on Thursday.

The artiste, MF Kapil was said to have drowned in the Souparnika River near Kollur in Udupi district after entering the water for a swim during a lunch break on Wednesday. Local police confirmed that a case of unnatural death has been registered, and investigations are ongoing after a search operation recovered his body the same evening.

The All Indian Cine Workers Association (AICWA) has demanded a probe into the death MF Kapil,. However, the film's production team has refuted claims that the incident occurred on set, asserting it took place during Kapil's personal outing.

In an official statement, AICWA expressed deep concern over the incident, urging the Karnataka Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah, to initiate an impartial investigation. They also called for an FIR against lead actor Rishab Shetty and the production house, along with a demand for Rs 1 crore compensation for Kapil's family.

Responding to the allegations, Adarsh JA, executive producer of 'Kantara: Chapter 1', extended condolences and clarified that there was no filming scheduled on the day of the incident. The film is set to release on 2 October *—PTI*

Deceased artiste MF Kapil *PHOTO: SALAR*

Cong rejigs Kerala leadership ahead of 2026 elections

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

The Congress announced significant organisational changes in its Kerala unit, appointing Sunny Joseph as the new president, replacing K Sudhakaran. Joseph, a sitting MLA, will be supported by three new working presidents: PC Vishnunadh, AP Anil Kumar, both MLAs, and Shafi Parambil, an MP. The appointments come as the party prepares for state assembly elections in 2026. Alongside the new leadership, Adoor Prakash, a party MP, has been designated as the convenor of the United Democratic Front (UDF) alliance in Kerala. A statement from AICC general secretary KC Venugopal also acknowledged the contributions of outgoing leaders including K Sudhakaran and UDF convenor MM Hassan, Kodikkunnil Suresh, TN Prathapan, and T Siddique. K Sudhakaran and Akhilesh Prasad Singh were appointed as permanent invitees to the CWC. —*PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Stalin reshuffles portfolios of law ministers

CHENNAI, 8 MAY

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has made a notable cabinet reshuffle, transferring the mines and minerals portfolio from senior minister Duraimurugan to S Regupathy. In return, Duraimurugan, currently Minister for Water Resources, takes on the law portfolio held by Regupathy. An official announcement from Raj Bhavan stated, "The portfolio of Law has been allotted to Thiru Duraimurugan. Further, the portfolio of Minerals and Mines has been assigned to Thiru S Regupathy, designating him as Minister for Natural Resources." The rationale behind the abrupt change remains unclear. Duraimurugan, 86, is a law graduate and is serving his tenth term in the Tamil Nadu Assembly. Regupathy, aged 74, currently in his third term as an MLA, has a history of roles, including Environment during the UPA regime. —*PTI*

RAJASTHAN, PUNJAB & GUJARAT ON HIGH ALERT

Security upped in coastal areas; blackouts in many districts

AHMEDABAD/ CHANDIGARH/JAIPUR 8 MAY

States bordering Pakistan are on high alert as the country braces for an attack. Leaves of all police personnel in Rajasthan and Punjab and Gujarat have been cancelled, officials said on Thursday.

The move follows 'Operation Sindoor'.

Gujarat shares land and sea borders with Pakistan. While Punjab shares a 532-km border with Pakistan, in Rajasthan, the border stretches about 1,070 km.

Schools in the border four border districts of Rajasthan--Sri Ganganagar, Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Barmer.

Punjab meanwhile, shut down all educational institues for the next three days.

A blackout observed in Amritsar following heightened tension with Pakistan on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

A blackout has been enforced in Ferozepur, Pathankot, Fazilka, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Tarn Taran, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Mohali in Punjab and Union Territory Chandigarh. Several Gujarat districts also saw a blackout.

Ashok Kumar Yadav, Inspector General of Rajkot Range, said police along the coast along Gujarat have been put on "alert" mode. Personnel from the State Reserve Police (SRP) and Gram Rakshak Dal are working with local police for round-the-clock patrolling and vehicle checking in the coastal belt.

On the other side, Meghalaya imposed night curfew in areas along the around 40km unfenced portion of the India-Bangladesh border. West Bengal also cancelled the leave of all state government employees, as it shares a 2,217km border with Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, metal debris was found scattered in three villages of Amritsar and in a village Gujarat's Kutch, with some locals claiming them to be parts of missiles and drones. —*PTI*

Navy gets first anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft

The first of eight anti-submarine warfare (ASW) shallow water crafts was delivered to the Indian Navy on Thursday by Defence PSU Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd.

Usage

- Patrol coastal waters as well as search and attack.
- Carry out coordinated anti-submarine operations with aircraft.

- **'INS Arnala'** is the first ASW delivered and is called the **'most silent ship'**.
- It is named after an island with a historic fort off the **Maharashtra Coast**
- Length: **77.6m**
- Width: **10.5m**

Made by

- Built on PPP model with GRSE collaborating with private shipyard L&T Kattupalli in Tamil Nadu. GRSE is making 16 more warships - three P17A advanced stealth frigates, seven ASW SWCs, two survey vessels and four next-generation offshore patrol vessels.

List of airports shut

Following Operation Sindoor, a total of 27 airports closed for commercial airspaces in North and West India. Here's a list of the affected airports:

Srinagar	Bathinda	Kishangarh	Porbandar
Jammu	Halwara	Jaisalmer	Kandla
Leh	Pathankot	Jodhpur	Keshod
Chandigarh	Bhuntar	Bikaner	Bhuj
Amritsar	Shimla	Mundra	Gwalior
Ludhiana	Gaggal	Jamnagar	Hindon
Patiala	Dharamsala	Rajkot	

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar shakes hands with Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia Adel al-Jubeir during a meeting, in New Delhi **PHOTO: X/JAISHANKAR**

Saudi junior foreign minister pays Delhi a surprise visit

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Saudi Arabia's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Aljubeir is in India on an unannounced visit and held talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday with a focus on de-escalating tensions between India and Pakistan.

Aljubeir's visit to New Delhi comes as the already frosty ties between India and Pakistan plummet.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also landed in New Delhi around midnight last night on a scheduled visit amid the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan. Araghchi will hold wide-ranging talks with Jaishankar shortly. He is also meeting President Droupadi Murmu in the afternoon.

After the meeting with Araghchi, Jaishankar had said India has no intention to escalate the situation with Pakistan.

"It is not our intention to escalate the situation. However, if there are military attacks on us, there should be no doubt that it will be met with a very firm response," he said. —*PTI*

> **India is justified in striking terrorist infrastructure. There can be no impunity for terrorists.**
>
> -Rishi Sunak, former UK prime minister

Israel, Singapore ask its nationals to 'leave India'

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Amid escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, Israel and Singapore updated their travel advisory for their nationals and asked those in the Kashmir region to "leave immediately".

The Israeli Foreign Ministry called on Israelis to avoid visiting the Jammu and Kashmir region, with the exception of Ladakh.

Israelis currently in Kashmir should "leave immediately" and obey the instructions of local security forces, the ministry said.

- Amid escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, Israel and Singapore updated their travel guides

Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) on Wednesday asked travellers to exercise caution, particularly in border regions between Pakistan and India.

The advisory added that Singaporeans in India and Pakistan can also seek consular assistance. —*PTI*

In all-party meet, Oppn backs govt

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

The Opposition expressed support for the government and the armed forces at the all-party meeting on Operation Sindoor, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said on Thursday.

Kharge told reporters that Defence Minister Rajnath Singh did not want to share the details of the operation as it was ongoing.

Kharge said Rahul Gandhi also urged the government to convene a special session of Parliament. He also expressed disappointment that Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not attend the meeting.

"I also said that we should run an international campaign against TRF and the UN Security Council should designate it as terror organisation. We also need to ask the US to designate TRF as foreign terrorist organisation," AIMIM Chief Asaduddin Owaisi said.

Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and BJP President JP Nadda attended the meeting.

The Opposition leaders present were TR Baalu (DMK), Ram Gopal Yadav (Samajwadi Party), Sanjay Singh (AAP), Sanjay Raut (Shiv Sena-UBT, Supriya Sule (NCP-SP), John Brittas (CPI-M), Sanjay Jha (JD-U) and Chirag Paswan (LJP-Ram Vilas) . —*PTI*

Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and JP Nadda, LoP in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and others leaders during an all-party meeting on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

Lance Naik, who died at LoC, was from Haryana

CHANDIGARH, 8 MAY

Lance Naik Dinesh Kumar of the 5-Field Regiment, who was among the 13 persons killed in the Pakistani shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch sector of Jammu and Kashmir, hailed from Haryana and has two younger brothers who are also serving in the armed forces.

Dinesh was 32 years old and came from a village in the Palwal district. According to his father, Daya Chand, he joined the Army in 2014 and is survived by his wife and two children, both minors.

"My son died while serving his motherland," Chand told reporters on Thursday. —*PTI*

Firms, Bollywood rush to trademark 'Operation Sindoor'

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Reliance Industries Limited and five others have approached the Controller General of Patents Design and Trade Marks for the registration of term "Operation Sindoor".

RIL was first to file the trademark application for the term under trademark Class 41 which covers services like education and entertainment.

According to the details available on the website of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, RIL, Mukesh Chetram Agrawal, Group Captain (retired) Kamal Singh Oberh, Alok Kothari, Jayaraj T and Uttam -- sought registering the term.

All applicants sought registration under Class 41 of the Nice Classification. This category is often used by OTT platforms, production houses, broadcasters, and event companies, suggesting that 'Operation Sindoor' could have become a film title, web series or documentary brand.

However, Reliance quickly withdrew its application, stating that it was inadvertently filed by a junior employee without authorisation.

Similarly, Bollywood scrambled to trademark the name. The Indian Motion Picture Producers Association, Indian Film and Television Producers Council and Western India Film Producers' Association saw 30 applications in just two days. —*PTI*

HOPE IN THE HORROR

Mosques, madrasas open for displaced residents in Jammu

JAMMU, 8 MAY

The doors of all mosques and madrasas in the Jammu region are open for the displaced border residents, prominent Muslim scholar Mufti Sageer Ahmad said on Thursday. He joined dozens of youngsters to donate blood for the victims of the war.

The blood donation camp was organised by the Madrassa Markaz-ul-Maarif at Bathindi following an appeal by social activists after intense Pakistani shelling in Poonch district on Wednesday.

"Islam teaches us that saving one life is like saving the entire humanity," Ahmad, who is also the head of the institute, said.

He said the country and its people need them at this crucial juncture.

"We have kept our madrasas and masjids ready for the border residents if they are to be relocated. If we can save a human life, we are saving the humanity," Ahmad said.

People organised blood-donation camps at different places over the past two days, while the Jammu High Court Bar Association is also planning to hold such an event in the district court complex on Friday.

Meanwhile, the Jamia Zia-ul-Islam, an educational institute, is providing accommodation to about 50 people, mostly border residents who were evacuated. —*PTI*

People organised blood donation camps over the past 2 days **PHOTO: PTI**

PREZ SANCTIONS PROSECUTION FOR LALU PRASAD IN RAILWAYS SCAM

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

President Droupadi Murmu has granted approval to prosecute RJD leader and former Union minister Lalu Prasad in connection with a money laundering case linked to the alleged railways land-for-jobs scam, official sources confirmed on Thursday. This sanction was provided in accordance with Section 197(1) of the Criminal Procedure Code.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has been investigating the case, having filed a chargesheet in August last year against the 76-year-old former chief minister of Bihar, along with his son, Tejashwi Yadav, and other family members.

In January 2024, the ED submitted its first chargesheet against alleged associates of the Prasad family, including Amit Katyal and other family members, such as former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi and MP Misa Bharti. A special PMLA court in Delhi has now acknowledged both charge sheets.

The case originated from a CBI FIR accusing Prasad, while serving as Union Rail way Minister from 2004 to 2009, of corruption in appointing Group D substitutes, requiring candidates or their families to transfer land as a bribe for jobs. —*PTI*

TWO NDA LEADERS JOIN CONGRESS; JMM TO CONTEST 12-15 SEATS

PATNA, 8 MAY

In a significant political shift ahead of the Bihar assembly elections, two senior leaders from the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) have joined the Congress party. Anil Singh, a former BJP member, and Shambhu Patel, previously associated with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United), were welcomed into Congress by the state unit president Rajesh Kumar on Wednesday.

Rajesh Kumar remarked that Singh's induction marked a "homecoming," referencing Singh's father, Ram Raj Singh, who served as a minister during the Congress's previous tenure in power. Anil Singh has twice held the now-defunct Chandi assembly seat, first on a Congress ticket and later as an MLA from the Samata Party, the JD(U)'s earlier incarnation.

Patel, who once held the position of JD(U) state general secretary, expressed feeling constrained within his former party. Kumar said that the inclusion the two would enhance Congress's prospects.

In a related development, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) is preparing to contest 12-15 seats, pending discussions with its INDIA bloc partners. —*PTI*

Maoist-planted mines kill three cops in Telangana

HYDERABAD, 8 MAY

Three police personnel were killed in a landmine blast triggered by Maoists in Mulugu district of Telangana bordering Chhattisgarh on Thursday, police said. The incident occurred under Wazeedu Police Station limits in the district at around 7.30am when a police team was on routine bomb detection duty. The Maoists triggered an improvised explosive device blast, resulting in the death of three police personnel, a police officer said. The banned CPI (Maoist) group had planted IEDs in the forest area while the police teams were on duty, the officer said, adding that further investigation is on. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Probe panel submits Ghatkopar report to Fadnavis

MUMBAI, 8 MAY

A committee set up by the Maharashtra government to investigate the Ghatkopar hoarding collapse in 2024, which killed 17 people and injured 74, has submitted its report to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, an official said on Thursday. The report, handed over in a sealed cover on 7 May, has been forwarded to the Home Department for further action. The six-member panel, headed by former Allahabad High Court Chief Justice Dilip Bhosle, examined the roles of those responsible for the hoarding and petrol station, reviewing financial records, prior approvals and possible collusion with officials. It also assessed current procedures for erecting hoardings on government and railway land, offering recommendations to improve safety and prevent future incidents. —*PTI*

CBI raids 11 sites in Gujarat in Karnani corruption case

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

The Central Bureau of Investigation on Thursday carried out searches at 11 locations in Gujarat and Rajasthan in connection with a corruption case against IRS officer Santosh Karnani. Raids were conducted at premises linked to Karnani, his associates and family members in Gandhinagar, Ahmedaba, and Jaipur. A case has been registered against Karnani and his wife under the Prevention of Corruption Act for allegedly possessing assets disproportionate to their known sources of income. Documents and digital evidence seized during the searches are being examined. Further legal and departmental action will depend on the findings of the ongoing probe into the couple's assets and financial dealings. —*PTI*

Jammu-Srinagar NH choked by mudslide, floods

MUMBAI, 8 MAY

Traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway was suspended early Thursday after heavy rains triggered multiple landslides and shooting stones from hillocks overlooking the arterial road in Ramban district, officials said. A flash flood also hit Ramban market but there was no report of any casualty, the officials said. Officials said incessant rains are presently hampering the road clearance operation by agencies concerned. Commuters are advised not to travel on NH-44 till the weather improves and the road is clear," a traffic department spokesperson said. The weather office has forecast light to moderate rain, gusty winds at scattered to fairly widespread places in J&K between 8 and 11 May, followed by rain on 12 May. —*PTI*

Take liberal view for disability pension: SC

Authority's decision to discharge a serviceman based on medical report is unreasonable

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Observing that a liberal approach must be adopted while construing beneficial provisions, the Supreme Court has granted disability pension to an army man relieved from the service for suffering from schizophrenia.

The top court noted that the authority's decision to discharge a serviceman based on a medical report is unreasonable.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and N Kotiswar Singh said reasons given by the Medical Board are crucial, critical, decisive and necessary for granting or denying disability pension.

The plea related to an army man challenging an order passed by the Armed Forces Tribunal, Regional Bench, Kochi, which denied him of disability pension.

The SC granted disability pension with 'immediate effect' PHOTO: PTI

The petitioner had joined the Indian Army on November 1988 as a sepoy and was discharged from service after nine years after being diagnosed with schizophrenia.

His discharge was based on the Invalidating Medical Board's opinion in 1998, which found that the onset of the disease happened while the appellant had been serving in a peace station. The disability being constitutional in nature was neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service.

The top court said a much more liberal view needs to be adopted while dealing with such cases as he may face several impediments and difficulties in proving the causal connection of the disease with military service.

In cases where the serviceman has been discharged by the authority, the onus of proving the disability and grounds for denying the pension would lie on the authority.

The top court directed the authorities that he be granted disability pension with immediate effect with all attending benefits, though he would not be entitled to any arrears of invalid pension, except for the last three years. —*PTI*

SC raps BJP MP Dubey for remarks on judiciary

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

The Supreme Court has censured BJP MP Nishikant Dubey for his remarks against it and the Chief Justice of India, saying they tend to "scandalise" and lower the authority of apex court.

"We are of the firm opinion that courts are not as fragile as flowers to wither and wilt under such ludicrous statements," a bench of CJI Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said.

Dubey launched a broadside against the apex court for hearing pleas against the Waqf Act, saying "(the) Supreme Court is taking the country towards anarchy" and that "Chief Justice of India is responsible for the civil wars taking place in the country".

The bench on 5 May dismissed a plea for contempt action against Dubey whose utterances scandalise and lower the SC's authority, if not interfere or tend to interfere with the judicial proceedings pending before it.

The remarks have the tendency to interfere and obstruct the administration of justice. The CJI said that "any attempt to spread communal hatred" or indulging in "hate speech must be dealt with an iron hand". —*PTI*

SC delays hearing on plea over political parties' RTI inclusion

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

The Supreme Court has postponed the final hearing of two Public Interest Litigations (PILs) aimed at make public bodies including major political parties under the purview of Right to Information (RTI) Act, intended to enhance accountability and minimise black money in elections and make thei funding transparent. The SC bench, led by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna indicated that the case may be heard on 15 May. The petitions were filed by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), an NGO, and lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay, The Central Information Commission had ruled that political parties fell under the purview of the RTI Act. -*PTI*

SC slaps contempt notices to states over vacant posts in PCB

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

In a damning assessment, the Supreme Court on Thursday reprimanded the governments of Delhi and the neighbouring states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan for failing to fill vacancies in state pollution control boards. The court expressed concern over the 55 per cent vacancy rate in the Delhi pollution control committee, branding it "virtually defunct." The court issued contempt notices to the 4 states for non-compliance with its August 2024 directive to fill the posts by 30 April. The Delhi chief secretary has been summoned to appear in person on 19 May, while others are to attend virtually on 18 July. —*PTI*

SC asks Centre to clear judges for HC appointment without delay

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Observing that High Courts have more than 7 lakh criminal appeals pending, the Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Centre to expeditiously clear names for judges' appointments.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan flagged the delay by the Centre saying, "the Central government needs to act and ensure that recommendations of the collegium are cleared expeditiously. Four recommendations of 2023 and 13 recommendations made in 2024 are pending with the Centre. The most recent recommendations made on 24 September, 2024 are also pending," it said. —*PTI*

Rescue and relief work is underway after a helicopter carrying devotees to Gangotri Dham crashed at Gangani, in Uttarkashi district, on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

6 Char dham pilgrims dead as chopper crashes in Uttarakhand

UTTARKASHI, 8 MAY

- Exact reasons for the crash of the chopper is not clear. The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau assisted by the state administration will probe the reasons for the crash of the chopper.

A helicopter ferrying Chardham pilgrims on way to the Gangotri temple crashed near Gangnani in Uttarkashi district on Thursday, killing six persons, including the pilot and leaving one seriously injured. Five women pilgrims were among the dead.

The helicopter, with seven persons on board, crashed over Rishikesh-Gangotri National Highway at around 8.45am, falling into a gorge about 200-250 metres deep.

The helicopter had left Sahastradhara helipad in Dehradun for Kharsali helipad.

While six people died on the spot, another was seriously injured in the crash. He has been identified as M. Bhaskar, 51, from Andhra Pradesh. He was airlifted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Rishikesh.

Three on board the helicopter were from Mumbai, while two hailed from Andhra Pradesh and one each from Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

The victims were identified as Kala Chandrakant Soni, 61, Vijaya Reddy, 57, Ruchi Agrawal, 56, Radha Agrawal, 79, Vedvati Kumari, 48, and Capt Robin Singh, 60.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami expressed grief over the loss of lives. He was monitoring the situation.

The administration has been instructed to provide all possible help to the injured and investigate the accident.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau will probe the helicopter crash.

The helicopter belonged to AeroTrans Services Private Limited.

The AeroTrans Services has two Bell helicopters and one Cessna aircraft. —*PTI*

ED raids in J'khand, Bengal over GST fraud

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday conducted searches in Jharkhand and West Bengal as part of a money laundering investigation linked to the generation of "fraudulent" GST invoices, official sources said.

At least nine premises in Ranchi, Jamshedpur and Kolkata are being raided.

The ED suspects that the accused Shiv Kumar Deora, Sumit Gupta and Amit Gupta allegedly generated fake invoices worth Rs 14,325 crore resulting in ineligible ITC (input tax credit) claims of over Rs 800 crore.

The searches aim to gather documents and assets linked to the alleged proceeds of crime under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said. —*PTI*

NDRF and SDRF personnel carry out rescue work after collapse of a building due to a gas cylinder blast in Bikaner, Thursday PHOTO: PTI

9 dead in Rajastan cylinder blast as building collapses

JAIPUR, 8 MAY

Nine persons died in a devastating explosion caused by a gas cylinder in the basement of a 3 storey commercial building in Bikaner, officials reported on Thursday. Five bodies were retrieved from the rubble, and a 17-year-old victim succumbed to his injuries. The incident, which occurred in Madan Market on Wednesday, saw the explosion trigger a catastrophic collapse that trapped numerous occupants beneath debris. Local jeweller Vikas Soni who witnessed the explosion, likened it to an airstrik even as as nearby jewellery stores sustained severe damage and loss of gold buried in the rubble. "After hearing the blast, it felt like an airstrike. When I reached the market, my shop was also destroyed," he stated, Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma expressed condolences, stating on social media platform X that the news is "extremely sad and heartbreaking." He assured the public of swift medical assistance to those injured in the disaster. Civic officials said the search would continue for any potential survivors. —*PTI*

No means no, Bombay HC in rape case

MUMBAI, 8 MAY

The Bombay High Court has upheld the conviction of three men for raping one of their partners, ruling that when a woman says no, it means no, and there can be no presumption of consent based on her past sexual activities.

"No means no", the bench of Justices Nitin Suryawanshi and MW Chandwani said in its 6 May judgment. Sexual intercourse when done without the consent of a woman is an assault on her body, mind and privacy, said the court, terming rape the most morally and physically reprehensible crime in society. "A woman who says 'no' means 'no'. There exists no further ambiguity and there could be no presumption of consent based on a woman's so-called immoral activities," HC said.

The court refused to quash the conviction of the 3 persons in a gangrape case but reduced their sentence from life imprisonment to 20 years. —*PTI*

CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

30% girls, 13% boys in India face sexual violence

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

- Highest rates of sexual violence was recorded in South Asia for girls ranging from 9.3 percent in Bangaldesh to 30.8 per cent in India in the long-term study done in 200 countries between 1990 and 2023. Sub Saharan Africa had the highest rates of sexual violence among boys under the age of 18 years.

Over 30 per cent of girls and 13 per cent of boys in India experienced sexual violence before turning 18 years old in 2023, according to an analysis published in The Lancet journal.

Estimating the prevalence of sexual violence against children in over 200 countries between 1990 and 2023, the study found that the highest rates were recorded in south Asia for girls ranging from 9.3 per cent in Bangladesh to 30.8 per cent in India.

Globally one in five girls and one in seven boys are estimated to experience sexual violence before turning 18.

The sub-Saharan Africa had the highest rates of sexual violence among boys aged under 18, varying from about eight per cent in Zimbabwe to 28 per cent in Côte d'Ivoire.

Sexual violence against children is a critical public health and human rights issue as it affects one's long-term health by raising their risk of mental health conditions.

The researchers said that accurate global estimates of sexual violence are important for targeted prevention and advocacy efforts.

This study reviewed publicly available repositories for data on the prevalence of sexual violence against children.

The team also said that the first exposure to sexual violence among teens and young adults before age 18 occurred for nearly 70 per cent of the world's men and women.

The authors also found "persistent data gaps", for which they stressed on expanded surveys and surveillance programmes.

They also called for more services and systems in place to support survivors of sexual violence for the rest of their lives and creating childhoods free of sexual violence. —*PTI*

Lakhimpur: SC lets Mishra see kin on weekends

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

The Supreme Court has relaxed the bail conditions for Ashish Mishra, son of former Union Minister Ajay Mishra, in connection with the 2021 Lakhimpur violence case. A bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and N. Kotiswar Singh allowed him to visit his family on weekends, notably permitting him to return to Lakhimpur Kheri from the evening of 10 May to 11 May. Mishra's legal counsel argued that he had not seen his daughters in 4 years. The court, however, prohibits him from engaging in any political activities during his visits. The case stems from violent protests in 2021, resulting in the deaths of eight individuals. —*PTI*

Pak floods internet with fake claims post Op Sindoor

Following India's strike under 'Operation Sindoor', Pakistan has been trying to mount a full-blown disinformation offensive—a desperate attempt to shift the focus with a barrage of lies and digital theatrics.

In response to a focused and effective military operation by the Indian Armed Forces targeting terror sites, Pro-Pakistan social media handles and even influential political figures are deliberately spreading fake news, fabricating stories of miraculous military victories and heroic retaliation that simply do not exist.

In a blatant effort to hijack the narrative and distract from the reality on the ground, Pakistan's state-affiliated accounts have turned to their familiar playbook: recycling outdated images, misrepresenting old videos, and inventing completely fabricated claims. Their goal is clear -- to flood the information space with falsehoods so quickly and overwhelmingly that it becomes difficult to separate fact from fiction. This is not just misinformation; it is a calculated, coordinated campaign designed to distort reality, mislead the public, and manipulate perceptions across the region.

One of the most prominent examples is a viral image falsely claiming that the Pakistan Army had shot down an Indian Rafale jet near Bahawalpur. The image, however, was debunked by PIB Fact Check, which confirmed that it was actually from a MiG-21 crash in Moga, Punjab, in 2021 -- entirely unrelated to current events.

Another brazen piece of misinformation surfaced in the form of a video falsely claiming that the Indian Army raised a white flag and surrendered at Chora Post. This fabricated narrative was amplified by Pakistan's Minister Attaullah Tarar, who publicly endorsed the claim without a shred of evidence. By lending official weight to an unverified and clearly false story, Tarar not only misled his own citizens but also actively contributed to the propaganda campaign.

In another misleading post, a video was circulated with the claim that the Pakistan Air Force targeted the Srinagar airbase. A fact-check unit of the Central government has debunked the claim circulating on social media. In reality, this footage was traced back to sectarian clashes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, that occurred in early 2024. The video had no connection to Kashmir or any recent airstrike.

A separate rumour claimed that Pakistan destroyed an Indian Brigade Headquarters, a claim that has no basis in fact and has been entirely fabricated, according to defence sources.

Additionally, another old image -- this time of a MiG-29 crash in Barmer, Rajasthan, from September 2024 -- was recirculated by pro-Pakistan social media handles to imply recent Indian Air Force losses, which did not occur.

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif was on Tuesday exposed on International TV. While appearing on a CNN interview the CNN Anchor asked Asif, "You say Pakistan shot down 5 Indian jets. Where's the evidence? A stumped Khwaja Asif replied, "It's all-over social media," The Anchor replied, " I'm sorry we didn't ask you here to talk about social media content."

The Defence Minister citing social media content to back unverified claims shows that the Pakistan's rank and file has relied on fake news to push its case.

Khawaja Asif also made a baseless claim that Indian soldiers were captured during the recent military strikes, a statement that was later debunked and retracted.

Asif alleged that Indian soldiers had been taken prisoner following Pakistan's response to India's Operation Sindoor

However, these claims were promptly dismissed as false, with no evidence to support the assertion of captured soldiers. The Defence Minister later retracted his statement, acknowledging that no Indian soldiers had been taken into custody.

These incidents reflect a deliberate and coordinated attempt by Pakistan to mislead the media, distort the global narrative, and manipulate public perception in the wake of India's successful strike under Operation Sindoor. By flooding social media with recycled images, unrelated videos, and fabricated claims, Pakistan is attempting to obscure the actual outcome of the operation and create the illusion of a strong counter-response. —*ANI*

Pro-Pakistan social media accounts are spreading a misleading claim by re-sharing an old image of a MiG-29 crash from 2024. This image is being used to imply that IAF suffered losses during military ops in Pakistan

No such attack has been launched at Srinagar Airbase by Pakistan Airforce
FAKE
@PIBFactCheck /PIBFactCheck /PIBFactCheck t.me/PIB_FactCheck

Claim that Indian Brigade Headquarters have been attacked by Pakistan is fake!
FAKE
@PIBFactCheck /PIBFactCheck /PIBFactCheck t.me/PIB_FactCheck

IS THE TRUTH UNDER ATTACK?

In another misleading post, a video was circulated with the claim that the Pakistan Air Force targeted the Srinagar airbase. A fact-check unit of the Central government has debunked the claim circulating on social media. In reality, this footage was traced back to sectarian clashes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, that occurred in early 2024. A separate rumor claimed that Pakistan destroyed an Indian Brigade Headquarters, a claim that has no basis in fact and has been entirely fabricated, according to defence sources. —*PIB*

SALAR ساہر

80 YEARS SINCE END OF WWII

Putin uses USSR's win in WWII to rally support

Hardly any other country marks the end of World War II with the same fanfare and fervour as Russia, for which the victory over Nazi Germany 80 years ago remains a source of immense pride and a defining moment of history.

Victory Day, celebrated on 9 May, is Russia's most important secular holiday, reflecting its wartime sacrifice. But it's also used by the Kremlin to bolster patriotism and regain the superpower prestige it lost when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

President Vladimir Putin, who has ruled Russia for 25 of those 80 years, has turned Victory Day into a key pillar of his tenure and has tried to use it to justify his 3-year-old invasion of Ukraine.

He has also sought to underline the failure of Western efforts to isolate Moscow by inviting Chinese President Xi Jinping and other leaders to the festivities, which this year have been overshadowed by reports of Ukrainian drone attacks targetting Moscow and severe disruptions at the capital's airports, as well as cellphone internet outages.

A look at why Victory Day is so important for Russia and Putin:

The Soviet sacrifice of World War II

The Soviet Union lost a staggering 27 million people in what it calls the Great Patriotic War from 1941-45. That sacrifice left a deep scar in the national psyche.

Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June, 1941, and quickly overran the western part of the country. They got as close as 30 kilometres (under 19 miles) from Moscow by October of that year, but the Red Army rebounded and routed the invaders.

Soviet troops dealt crushing defeats to Germany in 1943 in Stalingrad and Kursk. and then drove the Nazi forces back across the western Soviet Union all the way to Berlin.

Putin has noted that every seventh Soviet citizen was killed, while the United Kingdom lost one out of every 127 and the United States one out of 320.

"The Soviet Union and the Red Army, no matter what anyone is trying to prove today, made the main and crucial contribution to the defeat of Nazism," Putin wrote in 2020.

A Putin family story from World War II

Putin is deeply emotional to the history of World War II, saying "we will always remember the high price the Soviet people paid for the victory."

He often invokes stories from his parents, Vladimir and Maria, in the war, and the death of his 2-year-old brother, Viktor, known as "Vitya," during the 2 1/2-year Nazi siege of his home of Leningrad, now called St. Petersburg.

"It was the place where my mother miraculously managed to survive," Putin wrote. "My father, despite being exempt from active duty, volunteered to defend his hometown."

He also recalled in a magazine article how his father talked about a scouting mission behind Nazi lines when his comrades were killed and he survived by hiding in a swamp and breathing through a reed while German soldiers walked a few steps away.

Putin's father was badly wounded. After leaving the hospital, he walked home on crutches to see morgue workers taking his wife's body away for burial.

"He came up to her and it seemed to him that she was breathing, and he said to the orderlies, She's still alive!"" Putin's father recounted to his son.

The morgue workers replied, "She'll die on the way, she won't survive." But Putin said his father pushed them away with crutches and forced them to carry her back to their apartment.

World War II's role in Kremlin policies

Putin's emphasis on World War II history reflects not only his desire to showcase Russia's military might but also his effort to rally the country behind his agenda.

World War II is a rare event in the nation's divisive history under Communist rule that is revered by all political groups, and the Kremlin has used that sentiment to encourage national pride and underline Russia's position as a global power.

Victory Day parades are a massive show of its armed forces, with thousands of troops and scores of heavy equipment, including mobile launchers carrying nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missiles, rolling across Red Square, and flyovers of dozens of warplanes. Military parades, fireworks and other festivities are held in cities across the country.

Using World War II to justify the invasion of Ukraine

When Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, 2022, Putin declared it was aimed at the "demilitarisation" and "denazification" of its neighbour, falsely alleging that neo-Nazi groups were shaping Ukraine's politics under President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is Jewish. The claims were vehemently dismissed by Kyiv and its Western allies.

Putin tried to cast Ukraine's veneration of some of its nationalist leaders who cooperated with the Nazis in World War II as a sign of Kyiv's purported Nazi sympathies. He regularly made references to Ukrainian nationalist figures such as Stepan Bandera, who was killed by a Soviet spy in Munich in 1959, as an underlying justification for the Russian military action in Ukraine. —*PTI*

Chinese Presidnet Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin arrive for their talks at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia on Thursday, ahead of the 80th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany during the World War II **PHOTO: PTI**

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Indian scientist at NASA helps map Earth's changes from space

Accurate satellite data helps communities prepare for disasters, plan agriculture and understand extreme weather impacts. Rajat Bindlish plays a key role in making this possible. As a research physical scientist at the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Goddard Space Flight Center, Bindlish is a part of the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission—an Earth-observing satellite jointly developed by NASA and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). It is scheduled to launch from India later this year.

Mission overview

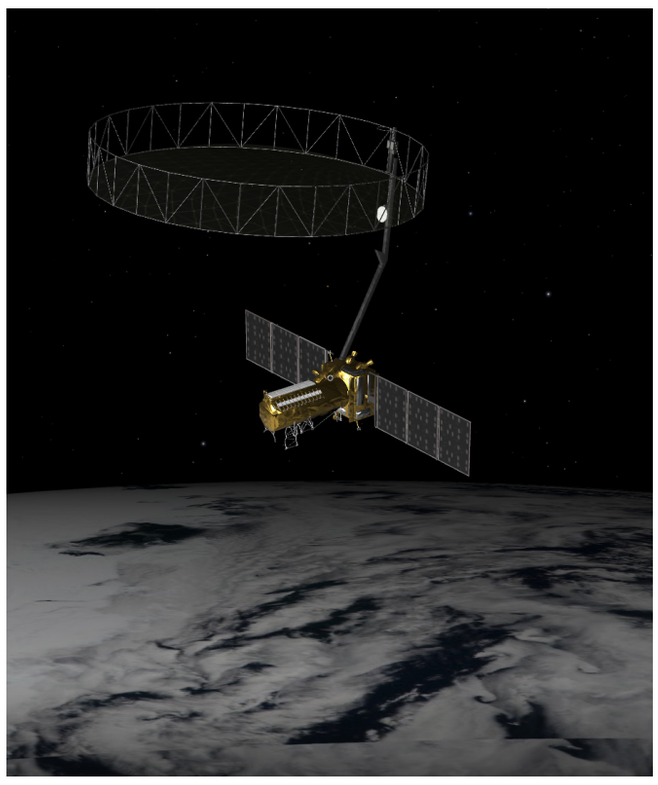
The NISAR mission marks the first time the two agencies have collaborated on hardware development for an Earth-observing mission. NISAR will observe and measure some of the planet's most complex natural processes, helping the United States and India work together to combat the impact of weather and other global challenges.

In the February 2025 US-India Joint Leaders' Statement, President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed 2025 as a pioneering year for U.S.-India civil space cooperation. They highlighted NISAR as the first of its kind to systematically map changes to the Earth's surface using dual radars.

"NISAR is the most advanced L-band and S-band synthetic aperture radar satellite developed," says Bindlish. It will provide observations on average every six days, with a spatial resolution of under 10 meters. The satellite will measure land deformation caused by natural hazards, track glacier and ice sheet changes, and monitor forest and wetland dynamics to support science and disaster response. "The ability to observe these events from space is crucial for national security," Bindlish adds. NISAR's rapid, global coverage will enable timely pre- and post-disaster observations, helping assess damage and guide response efforts—strengthening US and Indian efforts to protect lives, livelihoods and ecosystems.

Roots in earth science

An alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay and The Pennsylvania State University, Bindlish came to the United States for graduate studies in civil engineering with a specialization in hydrology. "As part of my research, I used remote sensing observations, which became a continued focus during my time at the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and now at NASA," he says.



NISAR is the first of its kind to systematically map changes to the Earth's surface using dual radars **PHOTO: NASA**

His early exposure to remote sensing shaped his continued focus on Earth observation. In addition to the NISAR mission, Bindlish also serves as the deputy project scientist for NASA's Soil Moisture Active Passive (SMAP) mission, an Earth satellite that measures water content in Earth's surface soil, to better understand terrestrial water, carbon and energy cycles.

Rajat Bindlish **PHOTO: SALAR**

Tracking soil moisture

The NISAR mission aims to understand the "dynamics of moisture in the soil and carbon storage in vegetation, improve the knowledge of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and landslides," Bindlish explains. "It will provide information about vegetation stress and irrigation, which will help enhance agricultural monitoring capabilities in support of food security."

Elaborating on the importance of soil moisture, Bindlish explains that it plays an important role in forecasting droughts and floods, monitoring crops, managing water supply and understanding land surface hydrology. It also guides irrigation planning — adequate soil moisture supports healthy root growth and nutrient absorption, which leads to better yields and improved crop productivity.

NISAR will use L-band radar to estimate soil moisture. "L-band radar can see through clouds and vegetation, making it especially useful for measuring moisture in the top layer of soil," explains Bindlish. The radar signal changes depending on how wet or dry the soil is, a result of how the soil stores and transmits electrical energy. Scientists must also account for the vegetation's influence on the signal to retrieve accurate soil moisture data. This helps scientists to assess moisture levels even when the ground is covered by plants.

Building on SMAP

Bindlish's work on missions like SMAP has uniquely positioned him to work on the NISAR project. "I have been involved with the SMAP mission since its inception, helping develop and validate the soil moisture algorithm," he says. "As SMAP's deputy project scientist, my responsibilities include operational decisions about the satellite, development of soil moisture products, science results from the mission and applications."

These responsibilities have enabled him to contribute to the NISAR soil moisture algorithm and its use for various applications. He has also worked closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on the use of SMAP observations to guide farmers. "I aim to transition these applications to my work on NISAR," notes Bindlish.

In addition to advancing scientific research, Bindlish values the opportunity to foster international collaboration. He considers working with ISRO scientists on NISAR a privilege. "The United States and India both have strong and very capable space agencies," he notes. "Earth science observations need to be made on a global scale to fully understand the complex water, energy and carbon cycle processes. It is important for these space agencies to work together for the benefit of humankind by advancing our knowledge of our planet."

—Courtesy, SPAN

SPAN magazine is a publication of the US Embassy in New Delhi aimed at strengthening ties between the United States and India.

PHOTO: X

Departure of Frmr B'desh president sparks furore

DHAKA, 8 MAY

The Bangladesh Government has launched an investigation after public uproar over how former president Abdul Hamid was allowed to leave the country overnight for medical treatment despite being accused of a murder case. Students' platform Students against Discrimination (SAD) launched a protest and demanded punitive measures against the people concerned within 24 hours. Bangladesh authorities promised actions against officials who let the former head of state leave for Thailand. Hamid who served as the president for 2 consecutive terms left for medical treatment to Bangkok in a Thai Airways flight from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. *—PTI*

X blocks account of jailed mayor on Turkey's request

ANKARA, 8 MAY

Access to the social media account of jailed Istanbul mayor Ekrem Imamoglu has been blocked in Turkey, as officials and reports confirmed on Thursday. The platform X restricted Imamoglu's account, which boasts 9.7 million followers, following a legal request citing national security and public order concerns. The account remains accessible outside Turkey. Gonenc Gurkaynak, the lawyer representing X in Turkey, has submitted an appeal against the restriction, providing extensive supporting documents to the court. The Turkish presidency's Centre for Countering Disinformation said the court's decision followed an inquiry into Imamoglu inciting crime. *—PTI*

123 vultures die of poisoning in SA's Kruger park

CAPE TOWN, 8 MAY

In a shocking incident, at least 123 vultures perished in South Africa's Kruger National Park after consuming the carcass of a poisoned elephant, officials reported. The elephant had been targeted by poachers using agricultural pesticides to extract valuable body parts. In addition to the deceased vultures, 83 others were rescued and are receiving treatment. This tragedy marks one of the worst instances of vulture poisoning in the park's history, raising concerns about the escalating use of poisons in wildlife crime. *—PTI*

Man charged with stalking US actor Jennifer Aniston

LOS ANGELES, 8 MAY

A Mississippi man has been charged with felony stalking and vandalism after an incident at Jennifer Aniston's home. Jimmy Wayne Carwyle, 48, allegedly harassed the actress for two years before careening through her front gate on Monday. Prosecutors revealed he left unwanted messages on various platforms before the gatecrashing. Aniston was at home during the event, but no injuries were reported. Carwyle is currently in jail with bail set at $1,50,000. If convicted, he could face up to three years in prison. Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman emphasised their commitment to vigorously prosecuting cases involving stalking and harassment. Aniston, known for her role in "Friends," has faced multiple security concerns, underlining the risks public figures often experience in their personal lives. *—PTI*

80 pro-Palestine activists held at Columbia varsity

Dozens enter campus library, clash with security officers

NEW YORK, 8 MAY

Even as the Trump administration cracks down on international students, Police officers in helmets streamed into Columbia University on Wednesday evening to remove a group of mask-clad protesters who staged a Pro-Palestinian demonstration inside the school's main library.

Videos on social media dozens of protesters pushing their way past campus security officers, racing into the building and then hung Palestinian flags and scrawled "Columbia will burn" across framed pictures.

Videos shared by a reporter on the scene show more than 30 people being taken away by officers with their hands tied behind their backs protesters outside the building by police cheering on the detained demonstrators and chanting "Free Palestine."

Police said at least 80 people had been taken into custody. The university's acting president, Claire Shipman, condemning the protests said the protestors had refused to leave the school library even as students were preparing for their final exams. The school then requested the NYPD come in "to assist in securing the building and the safety of our community," she said in a statement on Wednesday.

New York Gov Kathy Hochul also denounced the protesters. "Everyone has the right to peacefully protest," the Democrat wrote on X. "But violence, vandalism or destruction of property are completely unacceptable."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio wrote on X that they are examining visa status for "trespassers and vandals" who took over the library. "Pro-Hamas thugs are no longer welcome in our great nation," he wrote.

Columbia had announced sweeping policy changes, following Trump administration threat to revoke federal funding and said it had hired new public safety officers empowered to make arrests on campus.

Wednesday's demonstration comes as the US Justice Department announced it had brought hate-crime charges against Tarek Bazrouk, 20, for assaulting Jewish people at the demonstrations. *—PTI*

Violent pro-Palestine protesters clash with police outside Columbia University on Wednesday PHOTO: X

KASH SAYS MORE FUNDING NEEDED FOR FBI

Washington, 8 May

FBI Director Kash Patel broke with the Trump administration Wednesday over the proposed budget with slashed funding in order to 'reform and streamline its operations.' He warned that such a cut would be harmful for the FBI as it reorients priorities to focus on violent crime. "That's the proposed budget — not by the FBI," Patel replied. "The proposed budget that I put forward is to cover us for USD 11.1 billion, which would not have us cut any positions." Patel also defended the FBI's plan to relocate about 1,000 FBI employees from the Washington area to cities around the country and denied that the FBI had been weaponised since he took over. *—PTI*

QUAD PARTNERS HOLD TABLE-TOP EXERCISE IN HAWAII

WASHINGTON DC, 8 MAY

The US Department of State announced that Quad partners, specifically the United States, Australia, India, and Japan, held a Tabletop Exercise from 28 April to 2 May at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii, to initiate the Quad Indo-Pacific Logistics Network (IPLN). This initiative aims to enhance logistics capabilities among the Quad nations for rapid and efficient civilian responses to natural disasters across the Indo-Pacific region. The statement underscored the IPLN's role in promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific. *—ANI*

PUTIN BREAKS PROMISE

A man stands in front of a multi-storey residential building destroyed in a Russian airstrike in Kostiantynivka, Ukraine, on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

Russia breaches self-declared truce on 1st day

- One person was killed early Thursday in Russian attacks in northeast Ukraine, and two people were injured after Russian forces bombed the northeast Sumy region

KYIV, 8 MAY

Russia continued attacks against Ukraine even as it violated the 72-hour ceasefire declared by its President Vladimir Putin.

One person was killed early Thursday in Russian attacks in northeast Ukraine, and two people were injured after Russian forces dropped guided air bombs in the northeast Sumy region.

The bombs were dropped on residential areas near the border, the regional prosecutor's office said on Thursday. Ukraine's Air Force alerted launches of glide bombs and at least one missile in the Sumy region starting at 02:39 am and until early morning on Thursday.

Large-scale missile and drone attacks, which have been a near-daily occurrence in Ukraine in recent weeks, were not recorded since 8:30 pm the previous night, according to the Ukrainian Air Force.

But smaller-scale Russian attacks persisted elsewhere in the country closer to the frontline, causing civilian casualties.

A 55-year-old woman was killed in her home in Mykolaivka community in Sumy region around 3 am, and her 24-year-old son was wounded, prosecutors said. Roughly 30 minutes later, another bomb hit civilian infrastructure in Vorozhba community, injuring a 70-year-old woman.

Russia announced a unilateral 72-hour ceasefire to coincide with the celebrations in Moscow for the 80th anniversary of victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, Russia's biggest secular holiday. The ceasefire came into force at midnight on Thursday Moscow time. Kyiv has pressed for a longer-term ceasefire but Kremlin has imposed unreasonable terms for ceasefire. *—PTI*

Israel's supply blockade shuts community kitchens in Gaza

World Central Kitchen was serving 1,33,000 meals per day and baking 80,000 bread loaves over the past weeks PHOTO: X @FIRSTSOURCENEW

DEIR AL-BALAH, 8 MAY

Israel's ongoing blockade of humanitarian assistance for Gaza forced a leading aid group on Thursday to shut its community soup kitchens, faced empty warehouses and no replenishment of supplies in the war-battered enclave.

World Central Kitchen was serving 1,33,000 meals per day and baking 80,000 loaves of bread over the past weeks, but said it was forced to suspend operations since there is almost no food left in Gaza for the organisation to cook.

The lack of food is threatening Gaza's population, already battered by 19 months of war. Malnutrition and hunger are becoming increasingly prevalent in the Gaza Strip as Israel's total blockade enters its third month. Israel imposed the blockade on 2 March, then shattered a two-month ceasefire by resuming military operations in the territory on 18 March. It said both steps aim to pressure the militant Hamas group to release hostages the extremists still hold.

Meanwhile Israel permanently closed six U.N. schools in east Jerusalem on Thursday, forcing Palestinian students to leave early and throwing the education of more than 800 others into question.

Last month, heavily armed Israeli police and Education Ministry officials ordered six schools in east Jerusalem to close within 30 days, which ended on Wednesday. *—PTI*

SYRIA IN TALKS WITH ISRAEL TO AVERT WAR

PARIS, 8 MAY

Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa has said that his country was in talks with Israel to prevent recent hostilities from getting out of control.

Speaking to reporters in Paris on Wednesday, al-Sharaa said, "Regarding negotiations with Israel, there are indirect talks through mediators to calm down the situation, so that they don't get out of control." He did not say who the mediators are.

Al-Sharaa was on his first visit to Europe since taking office in January. During their meeting, French President Emmanuel Macron promised him to push the EU and US to lift sanctions on Syria.

Israel carried out a series of airstrikes on parts of Syria last week, saying it aims to protect the country's Druze minority from coming under attack by pro-government gunmen. Israel has its own Druze community and officials have said they would protect the Druze of Syria. *—PTI*

N Korea launches missiles into sea

SEOUL, 8 MAY

North Korea has fired several ballistic missiles into its eastern waters, according to South Korea's military, marking a continuation of escalating weapons tests in the region. The missiles were launched from the vicinity of the eastern port city of Wonsan and are presumed to be short-range ballistic missiles. However, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff did not specify the distance they travelled following the launch.

This marks North Korea's first ballistic activity since 10 March, when it conducted several missile tests shortly after the commencement of joint military exercises between the US and South Korea. The latest launch represents the sixth such event this year, prompting heightened surveillance measures from South Korea, which is sharing information about the launches with the United States and Japan. *—PTI*

A man watches a news report about North Korea's latest missile launches in Seoul, South Korea, on Thursday PHOTO: X

Brazil court allows gender neutral ID in documents

SAO PAULO, 8 MAY

A court in Brazil has allowed a person to identify as gender neutral on official documents, an unprecedented decision that could still be reviewed.

The ruling was made by a panel of the Superior Court of Justice in the capital city of Brasilia on Wednesday in the case of a person seeking a gender-neutral designation on their birth certificate.

The authorisation applies to a person who initially requested to be described as male following a hormone treatment, but later regretted this and appealed to the court.

The case is currently sealed, the Superior Court of Justice said in a statement.

Nancy Andrighi, one of the judges in the panel and the case rapporteur, described the issue as dramatic in her ruling. *—PTI*

Saeed challenges his conviction for terror financing

LAHORE, 8 MAY

Mumbai terror attack mastermind and banned Jamaat-ud-Dawah's chief Hafiz Saeed has filed a petition in a Pakistani court, challenging his conviction for multiple years in terror financing cases, a court official said on Thursday.

"Saeed and some other leaders of Jamaat-ud-Dawah (JuD) have filed a petition in the Lahore High Court requesting it to set aside their conviction in terror financing cases," the official said. He said a two-member bench of the LHC comprising Justices Shahbaz Rizvi and Tariq Mahmood Bajwa has fixed the petition for hearing. The date of the hearing will be notified later.

Saeed, a UN-designated terrorist on whom the US had placed a USD 10 million bounty, was arrested in July 2019 in the terror financing cases.

Saeed, who has been in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat Jail since 2019, was subsequently convicted in terror financing cases. However, there are unconfirmed reports that Saeed is not in jail and is living in a "safe place." *—PTI*

GLOBAL WARMING

2025 witnessed world's 2nd-warmest April on record

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Last month was the second-warmest April globally, with the past 12 months being 1.58 degrees Celsius warmer than at the start of the industrial revolution, according to European climate agency Copernicus.

The agency said April's global average surface air temperature of 14.96 degrees Celsius was 0.60 degree Celsius above the 1991–2020 average for the month making it the second hottest only to last year.

April 2025 was 0.07 degree Celsius cooler than April 2024 and 0.07 degree Celsius warmer, Copernicus said in a statement.

Samantha Burgess, Deputy Director of Copernicus Climate Change Service, said, "Globally, April 2025 was the second-hottest April on record, continuing the long sequence of months over 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Continuous climate monitoring is an essential tool for understanding and responding to the ongoing changes in our climate system."

Human activities, especially the burning of fossil fuels, have pumped large amounts of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere raising the planet's temperature leading to extreme weather events.

The year 2024 was the first calendar year when the global average temperature was 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial levels.

Scientists at Copernicus said the average sea surface temperature (SST) during the month of April 2025 was 20.89 degrees Celsius, the second-highest value on record for the month. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Gold prices fall ₹1,500 to ₹99,250/10g

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Gold prices in New Delhi dropped Rs 1,500 to Rs 99,250 per 10 grams on Thursday, said All India Sarafa Association. This was a reversal after four consecutive days of gains, with gold of 99.5 per cent purity also falling by Rs 1,550 to Rs 98,800. The declines were triggered by a weaker trend in global markets, particularly following US President Donald Trump's trade agreement with the UK. Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities, noted the ongoing volatility as various domestic and international factors impacted market sentiment. In parallel, silver also fell Rs 740 to Rs 98,200 per kg. Spot gold internationally saw a decrease of USD 20.69, reflecting similar pressures on safe-haven assets. *—PTI*

India–Pak tussle ups credit risks for both

Rating agency S&P Global says the situation raises the 'spectre of miscalculations'

PHOTO:CHATGPT

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

S&P Global Ratings on Thursday said the hostilities between India and Pakistan heighten risks to the credit metrics of both countries, and any escalation in clashes would put downward pressure on sovereign credit support.

S&P, which rates India and Pakistan at 'BBB-' with a positive outlook and a 'CCC+' (outlook stable), said in the current scenario, it does not see any immediate impact on sovereign credit rating and expects the tensions to remain high over the next two to three weeks, with significant further military actions on both sides possible.

"The outbreak of hostilities between India and Pakistan has increased regional credit risks, especially for the two sovereigns involved. Our base case is for the intense military actions to be temporary, which will give way to a longer period of contained and sporadic confrontations," S&P Global Ratings said in a statement.

S&P said it expects India to maintain strong economic growth that allows gradual fiscal improvements to continue, and also the Pakistan government to remain focused on supporting the recovery of its economy and fiscal stability.

- S&P said India should maintain strong economic growth that allows gradual fiscal improvements to continue, and also Pakistan should stay focused on supporting the recovery of its economy

Both countries have no incentive to allow current tensions to become prolonged, it said.

Last week, S&P cut India's FY26 growth forecast to 6.3 per cent, from 6.5 per cent pegged earlier, citing uncertainty over US trade policy.

A protracted military conflict will derail the improvements to Pakistan's external and fiscal metrics that would support a return to macro stability. For India, a prolonged military conflict will also lead to difficulty attracting foreign investors, S&P said.

S&P said the current situation raises the "spectre of miscalculations and accidental clashes" that could escalate well beyond the intentions of both sides, worsening credit risks.

"The downward pressures on sovereign credit support will exacerbate if there is no material de-escalation in the next few weeks," S&P said. *—PTI*

Volatile markets cost Indian traders ₹5L cr

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Investors' wealth declined by Rs 5 lakh crore on Thursday as markets fell in a volatile session amid escalating tensions between India and Pakistan.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped by 411.97 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 80,334.81 as the benchmark index lost momentum in the afternoon session despite a firm beginning. The benchmark tanked 759.17 points or 0.94 per cent to hit a low of 79,987.61 in the pre-close trade.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 5,00,037.74 crore to Rs 4,18,50,596.04 crore.

"Benchmark indices closed sharply lower on Thursday amid escalating tensions with the neighbouring country. Market traded in a narrow range till noon, before plunging lower on reports of further escalation in the tensions," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

"The Indian equity market experienced profit-booking by the end of the trading day due to escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, marked by increased cross-border exchanges. The FOMC policy meeting provided little reassurance, as the FED expressed concerns that aggressive US tariffs could fuel inflation and raise unemployment," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. *—PTI*

Pak bourses fall 6.7% over India–Pak clash

KARACHI, 8 MAY

The Pakistan Stock Exchange plunged by 6.67 per cent on Thursday with trading halted for an hour after rumours of escalation in military action by India near Karachi.

The benchmark KSE100 index tumbled 6,948.73 points (6.32 per cent) to 1,03,060.30 before the trading was halted.

Trading resumed with Fatima Bucha of AKD Securities confirming the situation on the floor had calmed down a bit.

"But the situation could get worse as investors are panicking due to the geopolitical situation," she said.

The downward trajectory of the index was largely driven by negative contributions from key stocks such as cement, energy, bank, and technology, which collectively dragged the index down.

Meanwhile the government has taken measures to keep its foreign exchange reserves stabilised.

It has imposed a 60-day ban on importing and exporting precious metals, jewellery, and gemstones from Thursday.

The temporary ban was imposed by a Commerce Ministry Order suspending SRO760 of 2013, which governs the trade of precious metals.

The restriction is linked to the recent impasse with India as a potential strategy to limit the flow of metals.

The State Bank of Pakistan has also informally advised all currency dealers in both inter-bank and open markets to closely monitor dollar outflows, as the escalating conflict could rapidly increase demand for the greenback.

Zaffar Paracha, general secretary of the Exchange Companies Association of Pakistan said if the currency market faced any shortage it could be managed but if there was a prolonged conflict it could damage both countries. *—PTI*

BSE alerts members against cyber threat

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Amid tensions between India and Pakistan, the BSE has directed market participants to take precautionary measures on potential "high-impact" cyber-attacks by strengthening the monitoring of the systems. In a circular issued on Wednesday, the BSE warned against potential risks, including high-impact cyber-attacks such as ransomware, supply chain intrusions, DDoS attacks, website defacement and malware.

The stock exchange also asked its trading members to check if necessary security controls are in place, conduct risk assessment and mitigate any findings, besides beefing up security monitoring of the systems with appropriate incident response plans and increaseing threat hunting activities. This directive comes after an advisory was received from the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team highlighting a cyber threat campaign specifically targeting Indian financial organisations. *—PTI*

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

The volume growth of India's FMCG industry has slowed down in the March quarter to 5.1 per cent, driven by increased consumer purchases of small-value packs, according to the latest report from data analytics firm NielsenIQ.

Volume growth is slowing across categories, and non-food segments are still outpacing food in the FMCG sector. The industry reported a volume growth of 6.1 per cent in the March quarter of 2024.

Moreover, the rural market, which is mainly a small economy pack units market, had continued to grow faster than the urban market in the last five consecutive quarters, but this has also slowed down.

"In Q1 2025, rural consumer demand grew at a slower pace compared to Q1 2024, yet it remained four times faster than growth in urban areas, where consumption further decelerated. Rural markets continued to outperform urban counterparts across most regions of India," it said.

The FMCG industry recorded higher unit growth than volume growth in the March quarter, indicating a consumer preference shift toward smaller pack sizes, reveals the latest NielsenIQ FMCG quarterly snapshot.

In addition, small players – mostly unbranded – have gained ground with double-digit volume growth, helped by the resurgence of the rural market, inflation and changing market dynamics.

Overall, the FMCG sector reported an 11 per cent year-on-year growth for the March quarter, in which volume growth contributed 5.1 per cent along with a 5.6 per cent increase in prices.

Besides, sales volume through traditional trade, which includes kirana and neighbourhood shops, has also increased. *—PTI*

Rupee slides 84P against dollar amid geopolitical strains

PHOTO:X

MUMBAI, 8 MAY

The Indian rupee fell sharply by 84 paise to close at 85.61 against the US dollar on Thursday, influenced by escalating geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan. Forex traders noted that investors displayed risk aversion due to recent military actions involving drones and missiles. The rupee opened at 84.61 and fluctuated between a high of 84.52 and a low of 85.77 before closing at the lower level. On the previous day, the rupee had already depreciated by 42 paise amid heightened military tensions after India's strikes on terrorist camps in Pakistan. Experts foresee continued pressure on the rupee, compounded by a strong US dollar and rising crude oil prices. However, foreign institutional investor inflows could provide some support. The dollar index rose by 0.46% to 100.07, further influencing the rupee's performance in the forex market. *—PTI*

LG India begins construction of ₹5,000-cr unit

SRI CITY, 8 MAY

LG Electronics on Thursday began the construction work on its Rs 5,000-crore home appliance factory in Sri City – its third plant in India – as part of a broader push to strengthen its presence in one of the world's fastest-growing consumer markets. The South Korean giant's investment in the rising industrial corridor in Andhra Pradesh is the largest single stage electronics investment in South India. Slated for completion by the end of 2026, the plant spread across 1 million square meters will roll out 8,00,000 refrigerators, 8,50,000 washing machines, 15,00,000 air conditioners and 20,00,000 air conditioner compressors annually. The groundbreaking ceremony of the plant was attended by AP's HRD Minister Nara Lokesh and LG Electronics India Ltd officials, the company said. *—PTI*

Emirates enters elite league with $2B annual profit

DUBAI, 8 MAY

Long-haul carrier Emirates reported on Thursday that it earned annual profits of USD 5.2 billion, making it one of the world's most-profitable airlines. The Dubai-based carrier served 53.7 million passengers out of its hub of Dubai International Airport. The Emirates Group, owned by Dubai's sovereign wealth fund, saw overall annual profits of USD 5.6 billion. Emirates serves as a crucial link in East–West travel and is the crown jewel of what experts and diplomats refer to as "Dubai Inc" – a series of interconnected companies overseen by the sheikhdom's ruling Al Maktoum family. *—PTI*

Toyota sales boom, but Q4 profit declines

TOKYO, 8 MAY

Japan's leading automaker, Toyota Motor Corp., announced record sales for the fiscal year ending in March but reported a decline in quarterly profits attributed to a certification scandal. In the January to March period, Toyota's net profit fell to 664.6 billion yen (approximately £4.6 billion), down from 997.6 billion yen a year earlier. Quarterly sales rose to 12.36 trillion yen (£85.9 billion), an increase from 11 trillion yen. The company has been overhauling its vehicle testing procedures following revelations of extensive fraudulent practices, including the use of outdated data in crash tests and incorrect assessments of airbag and engine performance.

Akio Toyoda, Toyota's chairman and grandson of the founder, publicly apologised, assuring that the misconduct did not compromise the safety of vehicles on the road, including popular models like the Corolla and Lexus.

For the fiscal year, Toyota posted a profit of 4.77 trillion yen (£33 billion), a decrease from 4.94 trillion yen the previous year, while annual sales reached an unprecedented 48 trillion yen (£333.6 billion).

Toyota forecasts sales of 48.5 trillion yen (£337 billion) for the fiscal year ending March 2026. However, profit expectations remain cautious due to the costs associated with carbon neutrality initiatives and the impact of US tariffs. *—PTI*

Air India offers full refunds and rescheduling for defence personnel

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

In a show of support for India's military and defence personnel, the Air India Group announced on Wednesday that it will provide full refunds on cancellations and a one-time rescheduling waiver for those holding defence fare tickets on Air India and Air India Express flights through to 31 May 2025. The airline's initiative aims to acknowledge the "selfless service and dedication" of its personnel in light of recent events surrounding Indian Defence's Operation Sindoor. The refunds and waivers are available to support the operational commitments of defence staff, with the rescheduling option extending until 30 June 2025.

In related developments, several airline operations have been affected due to airport closures announced by aviation authorities. Air India has cancelled flights to airports including Jammu, Srinagar, and Amritsar, effective until 5.29am IST on 10 May. IndiGo has also suspended flights in 11 cities, including Chandigarh and Jodhpur, amid the operational disruptions stemming from military actions in response to the Pahalgam attack, which resulted in significant casualties. *—ANI*

Property Share files draft papers for ₹472 cr IPO

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Property Share Investment Trust, India's pioneering registered Small and Medium Real Estate Investment Trust (SM REIT), has submitted a draft document for a Rs 472 crore Initial Public Offering (IPO) for its second SM REIT scheme, PropShare Titania.

The IPO features a fresh issue of Titania units, without any Offer For Sale (OFS) component, according to a statement released on Thursday. PropShare Titania includes 437,973 square feet of grade A+ office space situated in G Corp Tech Park, Mumbai, which boasts ESG certifications. It is fully leased to a diverse range of tenants, including Fortune 500 and blue-chip firms.

Tenants have occupied the building for over nine years and there is a 3.3-year weighted average lease expiry. Lease agreements incorporate a 5 per cent annual rental escalation. Investors can expect a projected distribution yield of 9 per cent for FY26 and FY27, and 9.1 per cent for FY28.

The proceeds from the IPO are largely intended for asset acquisition. Located on Ghodbunder Road in Thane, PropShare Titania is positioned within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, benefiting from a substantial residential catchment area and robust social infrastructure.

Co-founder Kunal Moktan expressed enthusiasm for the scheme, noting its potential as an attractive investment alternative amidst a fluctuating equity market. *—PTI*

EYES ON BIGGER BETS

Dabur India to shun slow-moving products

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Homegrown FMCG major Dabur India will exit underperforming products like tea and diapers as part of rationalisation, said CEO Mohit Malhotra.

The company, aiming "to achieve sustainable double-digit CAGR by FY28 in both topline and bottomline" has renewed its strategy focus, building on its core strengths, he added.

Dabur is going for "rationalisation of underperforming products and SKUS in order to release capital for bigger bets. A few examples of these are Vedic tea, adult & baby diapers and Dabur Vita," said Malhotra during the investors' call.

These segments contribute less than 1 per cent to Dabur's revenue, which stood at Rs 13,113.19 crore in FY25.

"So we will get out of these categories and focus on big, bold equities which we have identified, and the core portfolio is where we will invest," said Malhotra.

Dabur, as per its new vision strategy, would continue to invest in core brands, would focus on premiumisation and contemporisation across categories, take "bold bets" across health & wellness spaces and also aggressively pursue M&A opportunities for creating a future-fit portfolio.

Dabur also plans to expand to double down on emerging channels like e-commerce, quick commerce and modern trade, besides effective expansion across urban and rural India.

"We will double down on emerging channels like e-commerce, quick commerce and modern trade. We will also focus on consolidation of stockists for better ROI (Return on Investment), reducing cost to serve in the urban GT channel and enhanced use of digital tools to boost extraction," Malhotra said. *—PTI*

SATELLITE INTERNET

Elon Musk's Starlink gets one step closer to Indian skies

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Elon Musk's Starlink has cleared the first step toward launching satellite internet services in India by securing a Letter of Intent from (LoI) the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) to beam services from Indian skies. Sources said Starlink now has to secure a licence before being able to start operations.

Starlink is a satellite internet service developed by SpaceX – the American aerospace manufacturer and space transportation company founded in 2002 by the world's richest man, Musk. It provides high-speed, low-latency broadband internet worldwide using satellite technology.

The firm has tied up with the top two telecom operators – Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel – to bring Starlink's high-speed internet to their customers in India.

Unlike conventional satellite services that rely on distant geostationary satellites, Starlink uses the world's largest low Earth orbit (LEO) constellation satellites placed at 550km above the Earth. This constellation of LEO satellites – 7,000 now but set to grow to over 40,000 – and its mesh delivers broadband internet capable of supporting streaming, online gaming and video calls.

Built to endure extreme cold, heat, hail, heavy rain and gale, Starlink can stay connected in harsh and severe weather conditions and in remote topography. It is particularly suited for rural and under-served areas where traditional internet service is unavailable or unreliable. *—PTI*

Red-hot RCB aim to seal play-off spot

Pressure is mounting on LSG skipper Rishabh Pant with every passing game

RCB VS LSG

HEAD TO HEAD
PLAYED: 5
RCB Won: 3
LSG Won: 2

RCB vs LSG Match starts at 7.30 pm IST

LUCKNOW, 8 MAY

When the two sides clash in the Indian Premier League here on Friday, Royal Challengers Bengaluru will look to secure play-off qualification, while the struggling Lucknow Super Giants will aim to stay alive in the tournament.

Pressure is mounting on LSG skipper Rishabh Pant with every passing game. His lack of runs coincides with the team's slide at the business end of the tournament.

LSG has lost four of their last five games and can only reach 16 points if they win their remaining three games. 18 is a much safer number in the play-offs race, and RCB would back themselves to get there after winning five of their last six games.

Pant, who became the highest-paid player at the IPL auction, has had a season to forget thus far. He has tried batting at different positions, but consistency has eluded him. His strike rate of 99.92 sums up his struggles this season.

LSG has relied heavily on their top three, including Mitchell Marsh, Aiden Markram, and Nicholas Pooran, but that will have to change if they are to go deep in the tournament.

"The dream is still alive. If we are going to win the next three matches, we definitely can turn it around. It makes sense when your top order is batting well.

11 May IPL fixture in Dharamsala moved to Ahmedabad

The IPL match between Punjab Kings and Mumbai Indians, scheduled for May 11 in Dharamsala, has been shifted to Ahmedabad owing to the closure of the hill town's airport in the wake of military action against terror infrastructure in Pakistan.

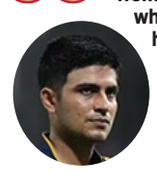
Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Virat Kohli, Romario Shepherd, and Lungisani Ngidi speak in the field **PHOTO: PTI**

Varun Chakaravarthy fined 25 per cent of his match fees for code of conduct breach

Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Varun Chakaravarthy has been fined 25 per cent of his match fees and handed one demerit point for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during the match against Chennai Super Kings. —*PTI*

"With just two matches remaining still hopeful of KKR's playoff qualification despite loss to CSK"

-Ajinkya Rahane, Kolkata Knight Riders, captain



"Forever remember the lessons that I learnt from Rohit Sharma, who has announced his retirement from Test cricket"

-Shubman Gill, India opener and ODI vice-captain

NOTHING TO DECIDE NOW, SAYS DHONI

KOLKATA, 8 MAY

Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni says "there is no escaping the fact" that he is in the twilight of his IPL career but a decision on his future will depend on how his body responds to the pressure of hard work in the next six to eight months.

The former India captain, who is being met with a sea of adoring fans in yellow at every venue he goes to, is well aware of the emotions and his passionate followers' desire to be there when he plays his last game. "That is the love and affection I have gotten throughout. Not to forget, I am 42 .—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

RR replaces injured Rana with Lhuan-dre

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Rajasthan Royals on Thursday named young wicket-keeper Lhuan-dre Pretorius from South Africa as a replacement for injured Nitish Rana for the remainder of the Indian Premier League. The 19-year-old has played 33 T20s and scored 911 runs with a highest score of 97, which came on his debut for the SA20 franchise Paarl Royals earlier this year. The Paarl franchise in the SA20 is also owned by the owners of the Rajasthan Royals. "He will join RR for his base price of Rs 30 Lakh," said the IPL in a statement.—*PTI*

Bihar leads charge as e-sports makes KIYG debut

PATNA, 8 MAY

Hosts Bihar led the charge with multiple top-three finishes across various events as e-sports made a historic debut as a demonstration sport at the Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG) here on Thursday. A total of eight states participated in the demonstration event, competing in disciplines such as BGMI, Chess, Street Fighter 6, and eFootball. Among all categories, BGMI continues to hold the top spot as the most popular esports in India.—*PTI*

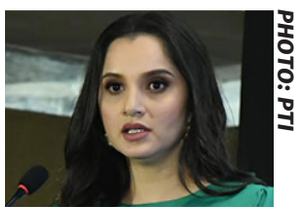


PHOTO: PTI

Sania Mirza applauds Operation Sindoor

DUBAI, 8 MAY

Former Indian tennis player Sania Mirza has shared a powerful message on social media, reacting to two women officers briefing the media on India's execution of 'Operation Sindoor' on Wednesday. Colonel Sofiya Qureshi and Wing Commander Vyomika Singh flanked Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Wednesday morning during the briefing about Operation Sindoor, which was a joint operation by the Indian Army and the Air Force, striking nine terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Sania Mirza celebrated the briefing made by two women officers of different religions.—*PTI*

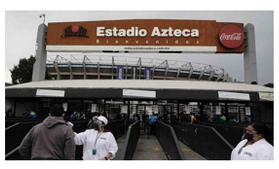


PHOTO: X

Azteca Stadium to reopen 75 days before start of WC

MEXICO CITY, 8 MAY

The revamped Azteca Stadium is scheduled to reopen 75 days before the start of the 2026 World Cup with improved services around it, Mexico City mayor Clara Brugada announced on Wednesday. The iconic venue closed last May for renovations ahead of next year's 48-team competition hosted by Mexico, the United States, and Canada. The 83,000-seat Azteca, which was recently renamed, will host five games, including the tournament opener. It also hosted the first matches in the 1971 and 1986 World Cups. Brugada did not reveal further details regarding the reopening of the stadium on 28 March 2026.Stadium director Felix Aguirre said they are thinking long term.—*PTI*

Ayush stuns Srikanth, Unnati also advances

TAIPEI, 8 MAY

Young Indian shuttlers Ayush Shetty and Unnati Hooda continued their impressive run at the Taipei Open Super 300 badminton tournament, advancing to the quarterfinals of the men's and women's singles events, respectively, here on Thursday.

Ayush, 20, a 2023 World Junior Championships bronze medallist, overcame senior pro Kidambi Srikanth 21-16 15-21 21-17 in a hard-fought second-round clash.

Srikanth, a former world No. 1 and silver medallist at the 2021 World Championships, is currently ranked 82nd in the world. The rising Indian, who had stunned All England Championships runner-up Lee Chia Hao in the previous round, showed maturity beyond his years to close out the contest. He will next face Canada's seventh seed Brian Yang in the last-eight stage. Earlier, Unnati, the 2022 Odisha Masters and 2023 Abu Dhabi Masters champion, made short work of Chinese Taipei's Lin Sih Yun, winning 21-12, 21-7 in just 27 minutes.

The 17-year-old Indian will take on local shuttler Hung Yi-Ting in the quarterfinals.

However, it was the end of the road for 2023 National Games gold medallist Tharun Mannepalli, who went down 13-2,1, 9-21 to Indonesia's Moh Zaki Ubaidillah in the second round. —*PTI*

ARCHERY WORLD CUP

Indian recurve teams crash out of medal contention

SHANGHAI, 8 MAY

The Indian men's and women's recurve archery teams bowed out of medal contention at the World Cup Stage 2 here on Thursday, with the men finishing fourth and the women exiting in the pre-quarterfinals.

The men's team of Dhiraj Bommadevara, Atanu Das, and Tarundeep Rai, seeded seventh, lost the bronze-medal match to the USA 3-5.

They narrowly lost the first set 56-57, with an arrow in the 8-ring proving costly. The American trio of Christian Stoddard, Brady Ellison, and Jack Williams then took a commanding 4-0 lead after dominating the second set 56-52.

Men's team of Dhiraj Bommadevara, Atanu Das, and Tarundeep Rai, seeded seventh, lost the bronze-medal match to the USA 3-5 **PHOTO: PTI**

The Indians faltered under pressure, shooting two arrows into the 7-ring and mixing two 9s and two 10s, including one X (closest to the centre).

Trailing 0-4, India fought back in the third set, edging the Americans 55-54.

However, their hopes of forcing a shoot-off were dashed as the fourth set ended in a 56-56 tie, with another crucial arrow landing in the 8-ring.

Earlier, the Indian men lost a tight semifinal to France in a shoot-off, 4-5 (25-26), relegating them to the bronze-medal match. —*PTI*

IT WAS ROHIT'S PERSONAL DECISION: RAJEEV SHUKLA

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Rohit Sharma retiring from Test cricket was a personal decision and there was no pressure put on him by the BCCI to take that call, its vice-president Rajeev Shukla said on Thursday.

Rohit announced his retirement on Wednesday ahead of the five-match Test series in England beginning on June 20.

"As far as Rohit Sharma's retirement from Test cricket is concerned, he has made his own decision.

"It is our policy that the players who decide retirement — we do not put any pressure on them, nor do we suggest anything, nor do we say anything," Shukla told PTI Videos. Rohit is an undisputed white-ball great but he could not replicate that success in the 67 Tests he played. Shukla said his contribution to the five day game was immense.

"The more we praise him, the less it is. He is a great batsman. The good thing is that he has not yet decided to retire from cricket (will play only ODIs). So we will take advantage of his experience and talent," said Shukla.

With Rohit stepping down, it remains to be seen who is elevated to India Test captaincy. Jasprit Bumrah, K L Rahul and Shubman Gill are among the contenders.

When asked about potential names in the fray, Shukla said that the matter lies strictly with the selection committee.

"There should not be any speculations. The selectors will decide and tell you who the captain is... it is solely and purely their call." —*PTI*

Police raid clinic to seize Maradona's medical records

BUENOS AIRES, 8 MAY

Police carried out an overnight raid at a Buenos Aires health clinic to seize Diego Maradona's complete medical records following a court order during the trial of seven healthcare professionals accused of negligence in the former soccer star's death.

Pablo Dimitroff, the medical director at Los Olivos clinic, testified that Maradona underwent pre-surgical studies, and the operation was performed by a neurosurgeon at that center without complications.

Those studies were not included in Maradona's medical history, and trial judges ordered the raid to seize all Maradona files dated between 3 and 11 Nov. 2020. Maradona had surgery for a hematoma that formed between his skull and brain and stayed in intensive care at Olivos between Nov. 4-11. He was then sent to recover to a private home where he died on Nov. 25 of 2020, at age 60. The raid started around midnight and extended to 4 a.m. — *PTI*

Osaka and Jabeur advance in Italian Open

ROME, 8 MAY

Naomi Osaka and Ons Jabeur advanced to the Italian Open third round in Rome on Thursday after ninth seed Paula Badosa and twice Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova withdrew due to injury. Japan's Osaka beat Swiss lucky loser Viktorija Golubic 2-6, 7-5, 6-1, and 27-year-old Badosa cast more doubts over her fitness ahead of the French Open as the Spanish former world number two pulled out of another tournament due to a recurring back injury.

Kvitova was forced to withdraw due to a leg problem, so three-time Grand Slam finalist Jabeur advanced via walkover and will next face sixth seed Italian Jasmine Paolini or qualifier Lulu Sun.

OLYMPICS 2028: VENUES REVEALED FOR OPENING, CLOSING CEREMONIES

DUBAI, 8 MAY

Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and SoFi Stadium in Inglewood will serve as the venues for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, LA28 announced on Thursday.

The 14 July 2028, opening ceremony will be shared between the historic Coliseum, which will become the first venue to host events for three Olympic Games, and the state-of-the-art SoFi Stadium, in an unprecedented dual-venue celebration. "The venues selected for the 2028 opening and closing ceremonies will highlight Los Angeles's rich sporting history and cutting-edge future, showcasing the very best that L.A. has to offer on the world stage," LA28 Chairperson and President Casey Wasserman said in a statement. "These two extraordinary venues will create an unforgettable experience, welcoming fans from across the globe to an Olympic and Paralympic Games like never before and concluding what will go down as one of the most incredible Games in history." —*PTI*

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Bukayo Saka misses sitter against PSG

PARIS, 8 MAY

Bukayo Saka missed from a near-unmissable position and Arsenal missed out again. A 2-1 loss to Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday ended Arsenal's hopes of winning the Champions League and halting a barren trophy run that now stretches five years.

PSG won the two-legged semi-final 3-1 on aggregate and will play Inter Milan in the final in Munich on 31 May.

Arsenal will wonder how another season of promise has ended up empty-handed.

"We have to learn from this. We did a lot of good things, but it's not enough," Captain Martin Odegaard said after the match in Paris. It might have been different had Saka not fired over the bar with an open net to aim at in the 79th, but Arsenal had already given itself a mountain to climb at that point, having gone 2-0 down. Saka reduced the deficit and could have leveled the score on the night if not for his wayward finish. "Inside the boxes, over the two games, we weren't good enough," Odegaard said. A top-class center forward is likely top of Mikel Arteta's wanted list when the transfer window opens, and his failure to strengthen his forward line in January has undermined Arsenal's campaign.

A challenge for the Premier League title fizzled out, and it is only Arsenal's form in Europe that has disguised its failings since the turn of the year. Arteta's team has won only three of its last 10 league games and just one of the last five. Blowing the lead against Bournemouth last weekend was the fourth time in five league games that it has dropped points from a winning position. Arsenal has saved its biggest performances for the Champions League, beating holder Real Madrid home and away in the quarterfinals. But its hopes of a first final appearance since 2006 were ended by a PSG team that finally looks ready to conquer Europe after more than a decade of lavish spending from its Qatari backers.—*PTI*

Bukayo Saka

FIFA picks 8 host cities for 2027 Women's WC

SAO PAULO, 8 MAY

Soccer's international governing body has confirmed eight host cities for the 2027 Women's World Cup to be held in Brazil.

FIFA announced the venues for the month-long tournament on Wednesday, but hasn't decided yet where the opening match and the final will take place. All eight sites were among the 12 used for the men's World Cup in 2014: Rio de Janeiro (Maracana Stadium), Sao Paulo (NeoQuimica Arena), Belo Horizonte (Mineirao Stadium), Brasília (Nacional Stadium), Fortaleza (Arena Castelao), Porto Alegre (Beira-Rio Stadium), Recife (Arena Pernambuco), and Salvador (Arena Fonte Nova).

"From stunning beaches to cosmopolitan cities, the world will experience the energy, color, and warmth that only Brazil can offer," FIFA President Gianni Infantino said in a statement.

Some members of Brazil's soccer confederation have said they want to hold the opening match at Sao Paulo and the final at the 78,000-seat Maracana, as it did in the 2014 World Cup. —*PTI*